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Training for Group Experience

A Syllabus of Materials from a Laboratory
Course for Group Leaders Given at
Columbia University in 1927

Recorded by
ALFRED DWIGHT SHEFFIELD

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PREFACE

FOUR years of joint study between the Inquiry and various national organizations with public programs have impressed many minds with the sense of enrichment and power that can accrue from group-thinking at its best. Wherever a board, committee, class, club, conference, or assembly has to explore a new situation, involving the strain of unadjusted conditions and desires, its members realize the need in our modern life for an art of group relationships. All our life-enriching interests—interests of work, culture, recreation, religion—are nowadays sustained by the mutual stimulus and enhancement of shared purposes and pooled resources. Those agencies, therefore, that seek for society increases of spiritual energy and vision are paying a close regard to the motivations and forces which spring into being or take direction from the forms of interplay within and between groups. Particularly they see in the conduct of group discussion a growing democratic technique—one that directs the insights and findings of social science upon the processes by which people generally take counsel together for the redirecting of their own experience.

This conviction recently led to a concerted effort among leaders in a number of national agencies. Having taken part in maturing the idea, they proceeded to cooperate in a laboratory course that should test its value. Through the Columbia University Extension, accordingly, there was planned a semester of study of group leadership, to be conducted by Professor Harrison S. Elliott and members of the Inquiry staff. The choice of Professor Elliott as director of this project was especially gratifying to the large circle of organizational officers who had known him as the pioneer teacher of discussion technique and one whose vision of its possibilities had made him a moving spirit in the whole Inquiry enterprise.[1]

The students were to be drawn from the cooperating bodies and were to meet the following requirements:

(1) They should show some promise of group leadership.
(2) They should secure field work in discussion-leading with groups connected with their own agencies.

The course was carried out in the spring semester, February 2 to May 21, 1927, with sixty-eight stu-

[1] Professor Elliott's ideas on discussion method can now be studied in his volume on *The Process of Group Thinking*. [Published by the Association Press, 347 Madison Avenue, New York, 1928; price $3.00.]

dents. Among the organizations represented by participants in the course were The Amalgamated Clothing Workers, The American Country Life Association, Brookwood Labor College, The Child Study Association, The Federal Council of Churches, The Girl Scouts, Inc., The Heckscher Foundation, The International Council of Religious Education, The Missionary Education Movement, The National Board of Young Women's Christian Associations, The National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations, The National League of Girls' Clubs, and The National League of Women Voters. The results of their cooperation have been such that the Inquiry is now under request from many quarters to continue the enterprise as a piece of educational pioneering especially addressed to the complex institutional life of our day. Before committing itself, however, to repeat this special service, the Inquiry offers the present booklet by way of interpreting the project—believing the resources for developing it to be now so promising that other educational agencies will be encouraged to take it up for the scientific advancement of group experience in all parts of the country.

A really complete syllabus of a training class would of course include much more than appears in the following pages. It would indicate the actual procedure from week to week by which the class developed its program out of the felt needs and

responsibilities of its members. A class of this sort is itself a distinctive group experience, and affords a variety of striking educative episodes. The present booklet, however, confines itself to a summary of the distinctive features of *content* in such a course. This is what the Inquiry has found, by correspondence and consultations with educators and organizational heads, to be immediately desired by university departments of Education and Social Science in making their plans for such an offering.

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INTRODUCTION

Group Action and Group Learning

FOR more than a generation our universities have been familiar with the Seminar idea in advanced studies. Seminar instruction proceeds neither by the lecture nor the recitation method. Its essence is the presentation of material obtained by the personal research of students, which is then subjected to general discussion and criticism. For a much shorter period of time, elementary and high schools have been acquainting themselves with what in pedagogical vocabulary is called the "socialized recitation." Pupils are called upon to contribute from their own experience, observation and reading, matter cognate to the theme of the lesson, instead of repeating what has been, in theory at least, studied in common by all pupils. Would it be too much to say that what is presented in this volume on *Training for Group Experience* presents a bringing together of these two procedures, one developed in higher, the other in lower, schools? The statement would, however, be incomplete, were it not added that the present volume deals with group experience that is organized with reference to action to be taken, policies to be decided, not to merely theoretical ends.

There has long been maturing a conviction that the intellectual methods of democracy are inadequate to the issues with which a democracy has to deal. So inadequate to their task have been its methods of initiating and formulating policies, that decisions have for the most part been made by small bodies of persons who may have indeed a public purpose to serve, but who may also have private ends to gain. These are then "put over" on the public for discussion and adoption, the appeal being largely emotional and directed toward securing adherence rather than criticism and understanding. We have had much condemnation of the process, but little suggestion as to how better methods might be developed and employed.

In various ways and on diverse subjects, there have been growing up, however, small groups devoted to securing a clearing house of facts and ideas by conjoint discussion with a view to attaining a common mind that might be put into effective action. It may well be that the historian of the future will find that one of the most significant features of present social life is manifest in the rapidity with which the word "group" has come into general use, and will discover that the pooling of experiences by groups in order to reach genuinely cooperative decision and action is their characteristic that reaches furthest. No such claim is made in the volume that follows; it is modestly confined to consideration of

ways and means and ends in a limited sphere. But one who approaches the theme in the light of the problems and failures that attend present democratic activity, both in large political issues and in lesser social ones, may well envisage its materials in this wider context. If he does so, he will ask whether there is any way out save the more and more expanded use of the method of group discussion. While the volume is primarily a discussion of the techniques appropriate to such inquiries as carried on by groups, it also serves as a working model and an object lesson for the idea itself.

In its narrower field and aspect, the book is concerned with deliberative bodies that have to do with the determination of policies of action. It is possible that in time the methods it exemplifies will find room for use and application in business boards of corporation directors, faculty meetings and all gatherings where decisions are made through mutual conference. But its especial material is drawn from boards and associations of a religious, philanthropic and social-service character. This fact perhaps accounts for the distinctively educational character of the record. For it is evident in such associations and boards that the aim is not limited to effecting a decision on some particular restricted issue, but is rather concerned with securing such decisions on special points as will deepen interest, create a more intelligent outlook on all similar questions, and secure

a more personal response from all concerned in the future. At all events, what marks the Record is the sense that in addition to arriving at definite decisions on particular points, an even more important matter is the permanent deposit left behind in developed attitude and interest. To say this is to say that the pre-eminently educational phase of such group gatherings is kept uppermost. The aim to get something done with a semblance of general agreement is made secondary to the aim to reach decisions by methods that enlist the combined thinking of all and that in consequence offer the promise of continuous interest not merely in action but in learning from further action.

If these introductory words emphasize the general meaning of the Record it is because the details of its operation are developed into a usable technique in the volume itself. It marks a genuine discovery to perceive, as Mr. Sheffield and his associates have done, that minutes and reports of boards and organizations have behind them an interplay of human feeling and thought, a consolidation of experiences, and that by thoughtful attention to the developing and ordering of this interplay, a genuine educative service may be rendered. In the happy words of Mr. Sheffield, it is possible to find discussion methods that in closing incidents will open closed minds.

Not the least significant feature of the book is its

contribution to sociological method. All of the social sciences are in various degrees now occupied in climbing down from the heights of abstract principles to the plains of concrete facts. But even when facts are studied, there is an undue literary preoccupation if the facts are merely read about. The prevailing "intellectualism" of higher education is both particularly conspicuous and particularly objectionable when manifested in the study of such a vital and going concern as social life. Visits for the sake of observation can do much to connect the study of second-hand material with a material that is in process of making. But it comes short of what is effected by personal participation. At home or at school most students have a chance to engage in some kind of committee and organization work. With the ideas and ideals of Group Experience in their minds, such students have a first-hand opportunity to accomplish something more than merely "doing" something or putting some scheme across. They can learn to reflect how their own experiences and ideas can be made effective, how to call out and utilize the experiences of others in reaching a decision for concerted action. They may make a beginning in and some contribution to a necessary but well-nigh non-existent art, that of democratic or cooperative thinking.

One of the things that will strike the reader—at least it has impressed itself upon my own mind—is

the constant attention here given to psychological factors. Every participant in group discussions that have anything more than an academic import is aware how prejudices, fixed ideas, reminiscences of interesting personal experiences, sore spots, and hypersensitiveness to anything that is interpreted as criticism, balk and deflect the course of thought. Fears, jealousies, personal ambitions, sense of prestige, past loyalties and past defeats, defense reactions, are nonetheless present because they operate delicately and covertly. A presiding officer often acquires great skill in avoiding them and glossing them and their consequences over. But this art usually perpetuates the evil; it keeps the realities of the situation out of sight, and makes an actual conflict of interests into a sham battle wherein everything is different from what it seems to be. In consequence the triumph of the views of one or of a faction is a sham victory. It has been gained by failing to bring underlying conflicts out into the open. There is no modification, unless it be an intensification, of the attitudes with which an issue was originally approached—in other words, no educative result. The suggestions offered in this volume do not tend to create controversy for the sake of controversy. But they do indicate how real conflicts of interest and belief can be brought out and utilized so that controversy becomes an experience in the art of effective inquiry and discussion.

We Americans seem committed to a policy of organization and association-making; we are inveterate "joiners." Critics with whom I have deep sympathy have pointed out the dangers involved in the cult of organizations. But clubs, committees, conventions, conferences, institutes, boards (wittily described as long, narrow and dry), assemblies, councils, leagues, circles are with us and are going to remain. Their dangers are found in excessive devotion to "getting something done" and in an emotional "inspiration" that is but a name for one kind of jag. Action and emotion without attendant thinking sum up most of the things that are open to just criticism. This record of Training for Group Experience does more than show how these evils may be averted. It discloses how the great and constantly growing array of organizations may be converted into constructive agencies of precisely the type of education a democracy most needs. This book and its companion volumes are welcomed as pioneer undertakings that open and explore a new territory.

JOHN DEWEY.

Training for Group Experience

CHAPTER I

General Plan of the Course[1]

THE Training Course for Group Experience, as carried out, related the sessions of the general class and of its sub-groups to the field responsibilities and practice work of those enrolled. In order to accomplish this, each person in the class engaged to undertake some actual discussion leadership during the period of the course. Where possible this "field practice" was related to the regular organizational responsibilities of the students, but where they had no such responsibilities, special assignments were provided.

In order to assure the fruitfulness of this practice work, it was carried on in consultation with members of the staff. This was accomplished in two ways: First, those who had similar types of field work were grouped together and met each week in sub-sections under the leadership of a spe-

[1] Outlined by Harrison S. Elliott.

cial consultant; second, there was provision for personal consultation between the students and the members of the staff in regard to their field responsibility.

Paralleling the practice work and these weekly conferences, there was a two-hour session of the entire class each week for the consideration of processes and principles involved in the group leadership which was being carried on, and for presentation of data underlying different phases of group effort. The content of the class sessions was determined in the light of needs in the mastering of group processes which the students came to realize in the course of their field work.

The course sought to make an educational contribution to the students' mastery of group-thinking technique at four points: (1) It viewed group discussion in its setting of organizational relationships and activities. Each sub-section of the class represented a special type of group with its own problems and functions—educational, administrative or promotive. Here the students subjected their customary arrangements and official procedures to a fresh job analysis. (2) The course helped the students in their understanding of the group-thinking process and in their practical skill as discussion leaders. (3) It gave an opportunity for a discussion of questions arising as to the practicability and suitability of the more free

democratic process of group thinking as compared with the more authoritarian and autocratic processes which might be employed. (4) It brought to bear on these concerns such readings from social science as would assure the student a grasp of data relevant to his responsibilities.

In dividing into sub-sections for the consideration of their field work, the students seemed to group most effectively under the following types of work:

Problems of the Club,
Problems of the Class,

1. Of the informal study-circle (e.g., a parent-teacher group on child guidance),
2. Of the study-group for influencing public opinion (e.g., a group of the League for Industrial Democracy),

Problems of the Committee,
Problems of Conferences and Conventions.

As the course progressed, the weekly conferences gave attention, not only to the actual work upon discussion outlines and to the consideration of difficulties in discussion leadership, but also to some of the special considerations involved in the application of group-thinking processes to these particular types of work. A summary of the material which developed in each sub-section will be found in the following pages under the sub-section headings.

The order and content of what was dealt with in the main sessions was determined by the develop-

ment of the work of the particular students engaged. Any other class might, of course, find different problems emerging. The course here under review covered somewhat the following matters:

A. *Development of Understanding and Skill in Group Thinking*

1. The entire class was carried through the steps of group thinking by means of a simple illustration of the choice of a route to a distant point. The students thus worked out, in terms of a concrete experience, a sketch-chart for group procedure in the following form:[1]

I. *The Situation and Its Problem:*
   1. What is the specific question to be decided?
   2. What factors in the situation are important and must be taken into consideration in the decision? Why?

II. *What to Do?*
   1. Examination of possibilities:
      a. To meet the situation and problem as outlined, what are the possible courses of action and the reason for each?
      b. What bonds seem to unite the group and on what is there agreement as to fact and opinion?
      c. What are the chief differences:
         (1) On matters of fact (as to what is true)?
         (2) On matters of opinion or point of view (as to what is desirable)?

[1] See H. S. Elliott, *The Process of Group Thinking*, p. 35.

2. Exploration of differences of fact and discussion of differences of point of view:
   a. What are the data on differences as to facts?
   b. What can be said on differences as to point of view?
3. Reaching a conclusion:
   What decision can be reached which will meet the situation with its relevant factors and what facts and opinions are the reasons for this decision?

III. *How to Do It* (ways and means)?
   1. What are the ways and means for putting the decision into effect?

2. Each member of the class followed this group-thinking outline and made an analysis of some individual problem. On the basis of these analyses, the instructor in charge discussed the difficulties which the students had found in thinking out a problem for themselves and noted their import for the group process.

3. The class studied what is involved in the chairmanship of group thinking. To this end, the instructor led the class through a discussion together and then had them examine and criticize this discussion in which they had taken part. This helped in accomplishing two things: It gave the students an added understanding of their thought processes, particularly as displayed in group rather than in individual thinking. It demonstrated something of what was involved in the chairmanship of discus-

sion and revealed some of the difficulties likely to be encountered. The function of a group leader and the difficulties thus illustrated were then summarized.

4. Attention was given to the preparation which the chairman of a group must make in advance of his chairmanship. This was studied in the main sessions, where an outline for such preparation was worked out by the class and the instructor in co-operation. The outline was then used in practice by the members of the class in their actual preparation for leadership.

5. Since a number of members of the class were responsible for the conduct of discussional groups making use of text-books, special attention was given to the group-discussion process in study-circles where text-books are assigned.

6. In order to develop the resourcefulness of the students in discussion leadership, the class gave a good deal of thought to the various ways of opening a discussion and to the use of questions in group discussion.

B. *Consideration of the Wider Educational Bearings of Group Thinking.*

Incidentally, as the whole subject developed, questions arose in regard to the group-thinking process

itself—as to what it involves, and as to where it is practicable and desirable.

1. Attention was given to the place of emotion in the discussion process, and particularly to the fact that thinking, instead of being a wholly intellectual procedure, involves an integration of emotional and intellectual factors.

2. Consideration was given to the ways in which information can most effectively be brought into the group process instead of being introduced in advance. The discussion brought out how data available within the group could be discovered and utilized, and how these could be supplemented and corrected through readings and lectures.

3. The special bearing of the group process upon legislative decisions was noted, where those who form the group come in a representative capacity.

4. Of particular importance was the recognition of the differences pointed out between the Herbartian plan with its five steps, on which much group work has been conducted, and the process of group thinking, which follows more directly the analysis of a complete act of thought as outlined by Dewey.[1]

5. At the close of the course, attention was given to the conditions for creative discussion and the place of discussion technique in the present democratic trends in various areas of group experience.

[1] *How We Think,* D. C. Heath & Co., 1910.

CHAPTER II

Group Problems Brought into the Course

AT the outset of such a course comes the question, on what basis can the students most profitably divide into sub-sections for weekly conference? On first thoughts there appears a special advantage in conference sections that bring students together according as they handle the same themes of discussion in their field groups (say, a free speech issue in a school, a plan for employee representation in a factory). This would assure them a joint study of the points involved in handling each specific theme —where, of course, differences in the discussing groups would occasion significant differences of procedure. On the other hand, featuring comparisons of the leaders' experiences with a common *theme* would lose the special points for study where leaders are dealing with the same type of *group*. This emphasis on theme would also obscure the importance of the states of mind that are engendered among group members by their status within the same organization. These considerations have invited a sectioning of the students on the basis of similiarity in their organizational responsibilities.

Here, too, the areas for fruitful comparison had

to be sorted out with some care. The students in the Inquiry course were mainly officers in large associations, any one of which carries on or shares in discussional meetings of a dozen different kinds. For example, a national association transacts its affairs largely through (1) action committees—administrative boards, finance committees, etc. From time to time it needs (2) adjustment committees for special situations that arise between itself and other organized movements. Its local bodies form fellowship groups which hold (3) business meetings with parliamentary procedure to elect officers and determine programs; and its educational programs, in turn, may be carried out (4) in forums open to all the members, or in limited face-to-face groups—either (5) clubs discussing situations or (6) classes discussing subjects. The work of these local units is stimulated by (7) regional institutes to which active members resort for training—dividing their time there between large assemblies and sectional groups. The programs of these assembly-and-discussion series are nowadays democratically set up by (8) pre-conference committees of leaders from the various constituencies. Salaried executives in the association are likely to attend (9) specialists' conferences for joint thought on technical problems. At times the overhead group is expected to send representatives to (10) a public opinion rally—say, on child labor, or American relations with China.

Finally, the whole association will hold (11) delegate conventions to appraise progress, inspire morale, take bearings, and agree on policies. The responsibilities of any given leader, therefore, fall within the activities of more than one type of group, and those of all the leaders in the course figured in more types of meeting than would warrant special conference-sections. It was possible, however, to sift out from these varieties of group experience what seemed most crucial in the group processes, and to plan for intensive work on them in sections dealing with leadership respectively in the club, the class—informal study-circle and study-group for developing public opinion—the conference assembly—discussional institute and convention—and the committee.

Since these sub-sections each viewed the rôle of a discussion leader in its due setting of group purposes and activities, they will here be taken up as presenting the needs from the field in response to which the course itself came into being.

Problems of the Club

At one time or another a man or woman of today joins some continuing association of persons who devote stated hours of their free time together in pursuit of a common interest. They call their group a "club"—thereby according it a sentiment of mutuality and loyalty as something that enhances

the worth of those who belong. In an industrial society, which uses only parts of people's aptitudes and interests during their work hours, the club may become important as a seed-ground for developments which people must win for themselves in free-time fellowships. Here each member gets various freshening contacts that stir new sensitivities in his nature and hearten him to try himself out in new social rôles. And the club meeting, under skilled guidance, can become a sort of resonance-chamber by which its members catch up social and spiritual valuations that would otherwise go unrealized in their work-a-day routine.

With such possibilities, it is natural that the club comes in for special attention from the so-called "character-building" agencies in any community—from the Associations, girls' clubs, and other organized leagues of young people. The common interest of the group becomes one somewhat fostered by outside leadership, and its values for the members are made a matter of directive concern by adult educators. Indeed, the purpose of any given club is usually conditioned by circumstances in the community that affect the interests and needs of its members. They may be drawn together by a common handicap or thwart—as where they are a racial or occupational group under some social prejudice. They may be organized by some promotional campaign as part of a national movement. Or they

may be simply cooperating—as in a trade union or an athletic club—to make collective resources meet individual needs and desires. In any case, the purpose tends to be somewhat broad and fluid, admitting of varieties of expression which give play to other interests than those formally professed as the club concern. Thus a church club, officially dedicated to an interest in attaching people to the church, will incidentally give play to interests in certain specific "doings" which feature in its program. To some members, indeed, those "satellite" interests mean more than the club purpose, and the success of the group may turn on the way such "marginal" members are dealt with by their more purposefully enlisted fellows. Besides these various common concerns in the club, there will be certain individual ambitions and drives that seek club-relationships for their assertion. Persons with gifts for administration, for speaking, for camaraderie, and others with emotional attachments to leaders add these forces to the magnetic total that sustains the organization.

The activities of a club give its members constant occasion for significant social thinking. Certain activities call for no differentiation of function among the members, so that what is done is done alike by the whole group. Other activities represent special congenialities among parts of the membership and are carried on by spontaneous sub-groups. Still

others are actions delegated to a few as representing and responsible to the whole. Varying with the seasonal round of the club's career, these activities display instructive types of function. Some are executive and administrative; some are what might be called "consummatory," achieving for the participants various satisfying wish-fulfilments, as in sociability, æsthetic invention, or self-enriching information and experience. Some might be called deliberately "group-building" or "institution-making" —such as the formal occasions involving features of ritual, oratory, or other morale-creating display. All these activities need a constant audit as to their values in furthering group-purposes and in the attitudes and learnings which incidentally they foster among the members.

Particularly important are the attitudes and ideas which they establish in people's thinking about democracy. Club activities must take form in some sort of program, and we accordingly have ever present the question, just what is the part of rank and file members—perhaps immature members—in determining the program. Is it simply to assent to plans formed by leaders, or is it to share in initiating possibilities and in evaluating alternatives? Most of us have gone further in professing democracy than in winning the specific insights and techniques that will make it work. Some of us, as adult leaders of adolescent groups, have made democracy

look futile by throwing upon young people responsibilities for which they were unprepared. It is a miscarriage of the democratic principle when decisions are put up to those who lack the requisite information and judgment. Democracy has its functions and claims within limits that are set by people's competency as well as their stake in the matter before them. Adult leaders of junior groups are therefore working for valid decisions when they go as far as to see that all who are parties to a situation have some "say" about it, and that decisions are reached by a process of group-thinking which both uses the contribution of experts and respects the conditions under which lay people can think at their best. In a young people's club it thus becomes a test of each group decision: first, that it shall be sound and compassable and, second, that the members shall *grow* by the process of making it. The place of an adult leader in the process is justified, as in any educational project, by his concern with certain values and attitudes which young people need to develop. But since among these values are those of self-determination and initiative, the club needs a special artistry of leadership through which decisions as to the program shall grow out of the members' best thought as to what is really worth doing.

Indeed, the advance of the "project" idea into adult education has roused the leaders of various

national associations of youth to a more responsible concern with their methods. They are seeing that where official and institutional pressures in effect dictate the local club program there is a loss in the first educative requisite—namely that of beginning with people where they are, with their own interests so alive as to dispose them to effortful thinking. For here the problem is how the members can find that mutual enhancement and release by which they shall progressively re-create the purposes of the fellowship out of their own developing purposes. Consider for a moment what is involved. The purposes of an association have a wide social concern; they are expressive of accepted ideals; they enlist group resources. In contrast, the really active desires of a new member seem narrowly personal; they are untested and confused; they are fitful and unresourceful in action. For all that, they are his own desires, not things "wished" on him by his elders. Any real growth for him lies through insights and enrichments that reach him here, from the inside of his own head. It is educationally of dubious value, therefore, for him to continue in a club program, not because it expresses his aroused interest, but because it pleases a club leader to whom he has grown attached, or because it carries as bait a gymnasium privilege or some artificial prestige. Around these possibilities the Inquiry has been concentrating thought and experiment to make club

discussions and projects really self-developing for club members. As a result, special outlines, questionnaires, "attitude-tests," and syllabi are taking shape as tools of collaborative learning, addressed to the ascertained needs of many types of club situation.

What has just been said of the program applies to the club organization. Officers and committees, of course, exist simply to carry out functions which cannot be discharged by the group as a whole. In many cases, the organized set-up of a club has been virtually "put over" by adult leaders—in fact superposed by requirements from a national overhead. The result is a set of officers and committees that corresponds to nothing that the club feels particularly disposed to do. In favor of such overhead promotion, doubtless, is the fact that it presumably gives the present group the benefit of the past experience of similar groups. But it is apt to be ill-fitted to the active interests of the members, and may foster habits of irresponsibility where committees are appointed which function only upon prodding from above. Owing to the close relation of club structure to club program, it also tends to wither initiative in the group, and to run its activities into a mould of what is deemed suitable for all groups of that age. Many clubs, therefore, are experimenting with more fluid structures, letting their committees spring up as interests are discov-

ered and projects take shape, and then dissolve as they cease really to represent the desires of the group. In this way it is possible to take constructive account of "cliques" as sub-groups that may, indeed, become divisive, but may give to special congenialities a useful status in the organization.

All these features of purpose, program, and organized relationships figure as the setting of group discussion, which is the real power-plant of club purpose and morale. Club meetings have always received attention as occasions of special stimulus to sentiment and loyalty. It is duly recognized that the seasonal course of a club from month to month has its rises and falls in vitality and esprit de corps, and club leaders have made much of periodic rallies, with a whole repertory of morale-creating devices: tableaus, rituals, uniforms, and symbols, all variously appealing to sentiments of group-solidarity. With a due regard to their "attendant learnings" (by no means socially appraised as yet) these things have their legitimate place, but they cannot supply the group-dynamic that can be won from organized discussion, where the latter uses methods that induce sensitiveness and resourcefulness in the participants. Much of the Inquiry course was devoted to the principles and procedures by which face-to-face conference can be made rewarding. Club discussions, of course, are of more than one sort, but whether in business meetings, committees, or infor-

mal study-sessions, the members are in a way to practice group thinking that gets somewhere. The art of club leadership, therefore, is coming to include a new art of group dialogue, a concerted give-and-take in which people deal with their differences in ways that are mutually revealing and creative.

Problems of the Class

The movement for "adult education" has occasioned much the same workmanlike scrutiny of the class that has been given to the experience of the club. It is realized that the rôle of a learner must be studied anew where the learning process is thought of not as a "preparation for life"—a storing up of book-lore by adolescents—but as a continuous audit of living: a voluntary regimen for people who are mid-stream in responsible affairs and are meeting together out of a desire to grasp the full meaning of their own experience as it comes.

As a cooperating group the class displays certain differences from the club that are important for its leadership. While the club is a permanent group, fostering among its members mutual stimulations to fresh interests or fresh developments of a common interest, and giving expression to these developments in free variations of program, the class is a temporary group, drawn together around a topic towards which the members' interests run parallel,

and expecting a unified program with a clean-cut beginning and end. Unlike the club, the class makes little of group-loyalty, the members feeling themselves under a common claim simply to study the assignments, attend the meetings, and take part in discussion. Leadership in the class is naturally vested in the teacher, since he is the only member of the group that can forecast the stages by which they are likely to achieve a satisfying grasp of their subject.

In the Inquiry training-course were teachers or organizers of two types of class: the adult study-circle and the public-opinion group. The former included classes made up of parents and teachers for the study of child-guidance and family problems, of young people meeting in churches and Christian associations for religious education, of wage-earners organized for study under labor auspices. The latter included unit groups of the League of Women Voters, of the League for Industrial Democracy, and of various leagues for the promotion of international good-will. Both types of class require of their leaders a special concern with two questions; namely, (a) How is information most fruitfully introduced in the learning process? (b) How can the learners develop open-mindedness in their reactions to social facts and values? These questions, of course, presuppose some agreed view as to how learning really hap-

pens. Without being dogmatic, one can perhaps say that educators agree that a matter is learned where it engages the mind of the learner in the following successive ways:

1. The matter is experienced as part of a "situation" felt to be problematic. One's outlook is beset with a sense of thwart and hesitation, due to a lack of grasp on items of fact and relationship—often also to uncertainties and incompatibilities of desire. This makes the matter vital and arresting. One expects to learn in order to live more competently.

2. One identifies specific factors in the situation—including factors of prejudice and mind-set in the people involved—as calling for various kinds of information and effort.

3. One brings to bear facts from books and special students of the matter. Also analysis of the various attitudes towards it, and discriminations that stimulate new sensitivities and interests. Where one's opinions had tended to hark back to their *sources* in people's "say-so" or in chance experience, they now tend to refer forward to their likely *consequences* if acted on.

4. What one *does* on the basis of one's new understanding makes the learning become a part of the learner. The satisfactions that attend one's new dealings with the matter reinforce the adjustments of attitude and assumption that have taken place, and dispose one to expect fresh developments.

Some such cycle of phases seems to be displayed in the learning process. This is not to say that in every educative experience the mind moves through these phases in precisely this order. A learning process may be set off in various ways: by a speech,

a passage of reading, a disagreement in opinion. Each of these is an educative incident, playing its part in a total process which is rounded out in the further reaches of experience.

The Adult Study-circle

Any study-project for grown-ups is an enterprise beset with large question-marks. There are questions about ways of recruiting the class, about choice and sequence in the subject-matter to be studied, about the desires that can be counted on to bring people out to the class and sustain them in the rôle of students, and about methods that will really meet them where they are and, without overtaxing their interest and their faith, set them forward in a satisfying educative venture.

With such uncertainties it is obvious that the conventional way of starting a course of study by a lecture and an assignment of reading is a way that does not meet the real situation. It assumes that the students are equally prepared to take in a lecture as a *program* for further thinking, and that they can and should hold themselves to a piece of reflective reading on the strength of the teacher's say-so that it will repay them. What it actually brings about is discouragement among the students that are not "book-trained," with a falling off of some who might have gone far had their start been more propitious.

Teachers of adult groups need to see in these conditions a unique educational job. The college teacher, especially, needs to face it as such. He is apt to forget that in meeting his college class he does not have to worry about the students' coming back. They may have elected his course as volunteers, but once enrolled they continue as conscripts. It does not seriously matter, therefore, if he rather misses fire with his first approach. Two days later they are back in their seats, and he can make good his faulty start. The teacher of a workers' class has no such luck. His students are volunteers from beginning to end, and will not live on hopes deferred. If a student feels his first evening in the class to have been unrewarding, it may be also his last evening there.

This means that the question of approach is all-important. Here are, say, a score of wage-earners who, acting on various motives and impulses, have formed a study-group. They present a diversity of aptitude and interest; they may be of both sexes and of widely differing proficiency as readers. Your problem is to devise a first step which they can take as learners together—a step which at the end of the evening will have given each student two things:

1. It should have given him a sense of achievement;

2. It should have given him an expectation of *use* for the information, so that he will read as one seeking thought resources, not lore to lie on the shelves of his mind.

To meet these conditions, perhaps the best teaching method is that of organized discussion. It affords exactly the step which puts the student at the point (a) of registering *some* achievement, and (b) of seeing an immediate use for reading. Thus, it starts him off with an activity already familiar to him—namely with argument, but it *refines upon* ordinary dispute in that it makes him a spokesman for ideas and a point of view and so casts him in a social rôle. Again, it introduces him to a methodical way of thinking that gets the most out of such information as he has. It makes him respect his own experience as worth scrutinizing. And finally, it sends him home hoping to find in the suggested reading the facts that will confirm or qualify the positions that have been defined by the speaking.

Certain members of the Inquiry course who were working with adult study-groups could hardly bring themselves to try this discussion approach. "People can't profitably discuss," they said, "until they have been measurably informed." But as Professor Elliott remarked, it is also true that people can't take in information profitably until they have been stirred to some *concern* with it, and discussion is the most natural way of sounding out real concerns. A person's mind works as a filing system. New information is lost unless it is filed under *use*-categories, and each mind makes its own use-headings. In fact, "unless information is tied up with

use as it comes, it probably won't get tied up at all."

The training course was here evidently at close quarters with the first of the two basic questions already mentioned (page 19); namely, "How, in an educational process, is information most fruitfully introduced?"

The Introduction of Facts

In an earlier conference of leaders, Professor W. K. Kilpatrick had pointed out that those who argue this question are apt merely to marshal claims for having the choice, place, and sequence of information determined by the teacher or by the learner—according to the side they are taking. Thus for the teacher as determiner it is claimed that:

1. His knowledge of the subject gives him a sense of its relative points of importance, without which the learners will choose information in a random way, taking what seems exciting or amusing, or what they happen to hit on.

2. He can present an inclusive view of the subject, without which the learners' view is fragmentary and superficial.

3. His view of the subject shows it as a logically organized arrangement of facts, where the learners' view of it shows only such fact-relations as their limited contacts can bring them to see.

For the learner, on the other hand, it is claimed by those who would make him the determiner of the process that:

1. The state of his interest in the subject determines what he will really learn and in what order. Only with roused interest do you get the practice and the attitudes that will carry him on in the subject.

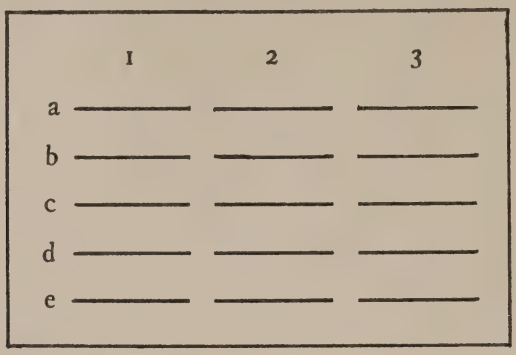
2. The inclusive view makes no impress on his mind if we hurry him to it before he has any *concern* with the facts that fill the information out "inclusively."

3. Organization of a subject is effective for thinking only as the person who is to use it has a part in making it. Prearranged symmetries make information sterile.

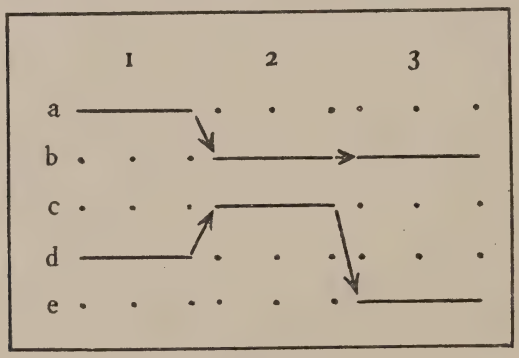
It seems unwarranted, said Professor Kilpatrick, to side with either extreme. The teacher's influence, arising from his sense of values, his inclusive view, and his logical organization, is not to be set over against the learner's interest, as if they were things opposed.[1] The real question is, How is the teacher's influence best applied? Where does the learning most effectively begin, and in what order does it best move to a state of information progressively more inclusive and better organized? The real opposition is between a learning procedure that insists on organization first and one that insists on interest first. The following diagrams indicate the difference:

[1] It will repay the reader to compare the treatment here of this opposition between interest and organization with John Dewey's treatment of the older opposition between interest and effort. The latter is instructively analyzed as a piece of modern "dynamic logic" by Boris B. Bogoslovsky in *The Technique of Controversy*, pages 84-95.

A. Subject presented as logically organized:



B. Subject developing with the learner's interest:



In A the teacher unfolds the subject as a logical whole, say, with the three main divisions (1, 2, 3), each with five subdivisions (a, b, c, d, e). The learner's present concern with it may be such that he kindles only at the points 1a and 1d, but the teacher hopes that a total view of the matter will

speak for itself and make its own bid for an eventual interest. In B the teacher and learner dwell on the points 1a and 1d at which a present interest can be capitalized. They study out the relations and implications of these items, and find that they involve other items in the subject—say 2b and 2c—in which the learner realizes some concern. In this way they will move, say, to 3b and 3e, and so on; perhaps eventually to a view that takes in all the items under 1, 2 and 3.

The traditional way of the schools is to offer the information as arranged in A, relying on credits and diplomas as incentives to keep the learner going. It prejudges the picture which the learner ought to get, and saves him the trouble of thinking its relationships out. The way of adult study-groups is to start with those items in the subject that touch the learner's interest. The teacher's part is to help the learner so to look at his experience with that item, and at its relationships, as to see his need for further items. In this way the learner's interest grows, and the information comes at each step to meet a need that he sees for himself. At each step the teacher is at his side, not dictating what he shall see, but directing attention to what is there to be seen, and raising questions as to what is most worth while.

The considerations that govern the teacher as a source of information apply with equal force to the

text-book. The organization of a subject in a book seems to have a certain finality, so that people tend to follow its lay-out slavishly. This is the more unfortunate in that a book rarely starts with the subject at the "situations" in which it touches the live concerns of the reader. The author himself has come by his knowledge by virtue of having been in situations in which the information was pertinent to his needs. Yet, when he comes to write, he looks back on the information with a logical interest, and organizes it in its logical perspective. The book, then, is the end result of a process, but the author forgets that for the reader it is a first approach. The latter is jumped to the logical last phase without passing through the psychological steps of learning. The teacher, therefore, has to solve this discrepancy between the book lay-out and the student's state of mind. It is his business to discover a "filing" procedure for the material in the text which is suited to his group. The circumstances of their special experience determine what they can assimilate from the "canned experience" between its covers.

With average adult students, not given to books, the class needs some resourcefulness in managing its reading matter. Its start in discussion must be prepared for, so that its members will have early occasion to cite accurately phrased statements from the printed page. In a number of workers' study-

groups a beginning is made with loose-leaf sheets printed or typed, supplying such material as well-chosen illustrative "cases," definitions of special terms, summaries of key ideas, and thought-provoking quotations of fact and responsible opinion. The loose-leaf sheets shape up, as the class continues, into a syllabus of the matter studied.

The advantage of study-material of this sort is that its organization becomes part of a training in deliberative method. It takes shape not as a treatise but as a program. Moreover, it does not have to be read through before the discussion can profitably begin. The quotations serve simply as springboards from which the students can launch themselves. They give occasion for discriminations between fact and opinion; and incidentally they afford effectively phrased bits which the teacher can ask to have read aloud by students who seem shy about speaking. The result is that a class with such matter in its hands finds itself in the very first hour together reading, appealing to experience, expressing discriminations, realizing that method counts as well as information in thinking one's way through. From a chance meeting of comparative strangers it will have become a cooperative enterprise.

The Stimulating of Open-Mindedness

The second of the two questions that seem basic to the study-circle was: How can the learners de-

velop open-mindedness in their reactions to social facts and values? Here we touch a crucial and unexplored sector in the movement for adult education. Too exclusive stress has been put on the positive advantage for study where the students can bring life-experience to bear in their thinking. There is also a negative side. Life miseducates as well as educates all of us, and the adult brings to the study of social matters certain states of mind that require an almost clinical attention if he is to achieve anything better than warped and colored pictures in his head.

For adult learners something of handicap lies in the very fact that they are grown-ups. As a thinker the average grown-up is apt to be inflexible, his thought taking lines that are staked out by certain fixed ideas—what Walter Lippmann calls "stereotypes." Furthermore, he has lived from childhood in a home atmosphere unfavorable to the "problem" attitude of mind. The home atmosphere of average busy folk is an atmosphere of will, not reflection—of command and obey. Its conversational currency is unverified opinion—this or that person's dogmatic say-so. Subtly present in it is often what Professor Overstreet has remarked as a sort of "frustration complex." Many people are missing at one point or another the more flattering forms of conventional success—and no man admits to himself the reasons for failure that wound his

self-esteem. He imputes it all to a frame-up of circumstances against him. In consequence, there smoulders deep within him an "anger-psychosis," disposing him to see life as melodrama, with people classified in blacks and whites. To such a mind society shows no complexities, and social problems appear as mere fights in which the sole question is, "Can we beat the villains?"

The adult study-circle, then, has a special task in bringing about an open, *considering* frame of mind in students who are disposed to fixed or passive attitudes. Specifically, the class discussions must contrive to deal helpfully with the following handicaps to thinking:

1. Defense-reactions where the matter in any way touches people's self-feelings. Thus a mothers' group discussing child-guidance may find its progress stalled by the way its members take everything personally that sets their own family relationships in an unflattering light.

2. The tendency to dwell on disturbing symptoms instead of looking for underlying causes. A parent may expatiate on blameworthy features of a case of disobedience—say, "talking back" or deceit, where a real diagnosis would look to emotional and other factors that must be understood if the case is to be dealt with wisely.

3. The tendency to oversimplify the causes of a social situation. This attitude of mind may appear in a habit *of personifying* the forces—economic, political, etc.—that have brought the situation about, so that its cause is simply Wall Street, or Moscow, or the pacifist, as the case may be. Or,

where impersonal forces are recognized, the oversimplifying may consist in reducing the causes to some one formula, so that *the* cause of all our difficulties is simply our foreign-born population, or the tariff, or the tabloid press.

4. A habit of dependence on authoritative pronouncements. This often appears in an impatience which some students feel at class discussion—their desire being to hear "what the teacher has to say."

It is perhaps in the pioneering groups of "workers' education" that a technique will first develop for dealing with the states of mind in teacher and learner. The teacher is often under a handicap among student trade-unionists, especially among those of the more radical wing. His school tradition is one of faith in humane culture as something "above the struggle," as a heritage to be set out disinterestedly for all comers. This gives him no common ground with students whose urge is a class-impetus, with knowledge viewed as a munitioning against "wage slavery"—as something to be set out hearteningly for the banded workers. Usually he has no method for dealing with prejudices (being unaware of his own) other than simply to call on people "to get at the truth, no matter whom it disappoints, and to follow the argument whither it leads."

The real problem with an adult, whether wage-earner or academic, is one of starting right mental habits where faulty ones are in possession. John

Dewey has compared it with the problem of correcting a faulty posture. The man who stands improperly does so from positive, forceful habit. To suppose that he is merely failing to stand straight is like supposing that a slave to whiskey "is merely one who fails to drink water." If he *could* stand straight, he would. If he could love truth, he would. He can't, because of mind-sets that "condition" his responses to evidence. With him the right start is not an exhortation about the ideal attitude. It is rather some step in the learning process which on the one hand inhibits his usual faulty attitude and on the other begins a series of steps that will lead into the right attitude. "Knowledge is power" only where there is its special "will to power," and in this case there's a will only where there's first been a way.

The Public Opinion Group

Certain special problems arise in the class which is a unit group in an association with a program for influencing public opinion. The class here has a common interest in the ultimate promotion of the program, as well as the immediate "parallel" interests of its members in getting themselves severally informed and competent in the matter under concern. Where the promotional purpose is simply that of advancing intelligent thought and effective action on a certain range of issues within certain

public groups—as in the League of Women Voters and in the Workers' Education movement—the problems may remain much the same as in other adult classes. But the common purpose of such a "public opinion" unit is naturally subject to a slant in favor of interests common to the group. And where the promotional purpose is frankly that of advancing some specific "cause," the chief motivation for study among its members may be that of qualifying themselves to win converts to their own present convictions.

Obviously, the first problem here is that of determining what compatibility there can be between education and propaganda. A good deal turns, of course, on what is meant by "propaganda." A text on *Discussion,* published by the Workers' Education Bureau, contains quoted arguments against certain trade union practices and views.[1] These quotations were recently attacked by a labor leader as "propaganda of the kind we have been trying to keep out of our trade unions." The grounds for the charge are (1) that these "anti-union" views occur in an innocent-looking text-book on speaking, and therefore take the reader off his guard; and (2) they are not matched, tit for tat, with the approved trade-unionist rejoinders. It seems to be implied

[1] Alfred Dwight Sheffield, *Joining in Public Discussion;* George H. Doran Co., 1922.

further (3) that anti-union heresies were best kept out of a labor text-book altogether.

Each of these three reasons raises questions that carry consequences for our educational thinking. Essentially they turn on the presence, in an educational process, of persuasively expressed convictions. In the instance cited the convictions were felt to be hostile to the movement that was sponsoring the study-groups. But even if they were in its favor the challenge against them would stand from those educators who hold that a true learning process rules out all efforts to weight the learner's thinking toward anybody's desired conclusions. As discussed in the Inquiry course, this view received some careful qualifying. Where the matter under study involves social values and convictions that are felt to be in conflict, it seems inevitable that both teacher and students will express them with the warmth of persuasive intent. It is possible, however, for each party to urge his own conviction, while inviting from the others a full testing of it by alternative considerations and evidence. "Propaganda," in the undesirable sense, is the effort to *manipulate* the thought process in one's own desired direction. It recks little of the integrity of other people's thinking so long as they are brought to stand up and be counted on one's own side. Real education, on the contrary, asks more of other people than to stand up and be counted. It expects

them to *count for something* in the kind of public opinion that is reached.

The educational approach to the organizing of public opinion is gaining favor even with leaders whose minds are set on winning converts to their cause. Psychology has rather discredited their earlier faith in setting people right simply by telling them things. It has emphasized the part of the learner's *participation* in the shaping of his beliefs. A political opinion that has been shaped by sales talk in the minds of more or less passive hearers is shallow and fitful. "Things that have been put over," says E. C. Lindeman, "don't stay put." Opinion-forming groups, therefore, are likely to give increasing thought to methods that are consistent with the idea of "social process." They realize that even with the best of causes something has gone amiss when its proponents seem to have put themselves outside the process by which conflict is made creative—as in certain pacifist groups whose fixed ideals cry down from a blue empyrean. The classes by which a cause will get an educational promotion will foster an engineering view of people's differences and will treat ideals as continuously in the making. They will make more of the smoking out and removing of divisive assumptions and prejudices than of merely refuting arguments. And they will work for a public opinion that is demo-

cratically sound in its uses of authority, representation, and leadership.

Problems of the Conference Assembly

In the scores of yearly conferences, institutes, and conventions there are opportunities for group leadership that have only begun to be analyzed with a view to developing their largest possibilities. In a period of from two to ten days, an assembly of delegates goes through an intensive and vivid experience that frames within its span what otherwise happens in a club or organization during weeks of meetings. Already these gatherings are modifying their methods in response to a more critical regard for their educational and political effectiveness. Their further development seems to call for a clear recognition of a difference of type, according as they are organized: (1) to deal with matters that call for common counsel and study, but not for legislative decision; or (2) to deal with matters that require legislative action. As studied in the Inquiry training course, their problems were taken up under headings descriptive of these types: the Institute and the Convention.

The Conference Institute

The summer conference has become a widespread American institution. It brings together the more active members out of local groups of an inclusive

association. Its program, running through a period of days, is shaped by the purpose of rousing interest and developing local leadership for study projects that are carried on by the home constituencies. The prevailingly low educational value of assemblies of this type seems due to a traditionary reliance on "speakers"—informing or exhorting—with the delegates sitting passive. To conference leaders the alternative has always seemed to be random and impromptu talk by lay folk in no responsible contact with facts. But the newer educational views are suggesting procedures that draw upon both the information of specialists and the experience of lay learners, and include ways to deal with factors intractible to mere exhorting—namely, the attitudes, assumptions, and prejudices that condition people's responses to ideas.

The organizations represented thus far in the study of these newer procedures have been mainly the religious education groups: the Christian Associations, Young People's Societies, the Missionary Education Movement, the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order, and others. Their approach to the analysis of conference experience has been staked out by two questions, viz.:

I. How can conference leaders get at the real problems and concerns of the delegates, so that the conference experience shall pick up their life experiences at the points of awakened interest?

II. By what methods can the institute program carry out its distinctive aims?

These questions, it would seem, must be applied to the procedure of *every* conference institute with a mainly educational aim. In order to be educationally sound, its program would need to meet the following requisites:

A. Its subject matter should be recognizably connected with the life experiences of the delegates. Preferably the conference itself should come to them as an occasion continuous with some program at home. It should relate to interests in which their own activities have given them some concern, however slight; and it should lead them toward further activities in which new ideas can be "practiced with satisfaction."

B. The delegates should be brought together in a thought-process through which they mutually revaluate and adjust their differences of view and feeling. Conference leaders may help them with information and stimulus, but the meetings should be staged to induce real personal convictions, not crowd assent to the views of leaders.

C. Each issue before the conference should be studied in the diverse situations in which the delegates have faced it, since their mastery of the issue depends on their recognizing it in new connections.

The problem of getting at the vital concerns of the delegates is being dealt with in several ways, each of which calls for further check-up and appraisal. Some leaders simply start their conference with testimony from the delegates as to their home

situations and problems. Other leaders seek to get the most pertinent data of this sort in advance, by asking the delegates before coming to fill out a questionnaire. Still others suggest "problem-finding" discussions, to be carried out in home clubs and reported on to the leaders in time to set the themes for the conference. An additional step is taken by the Christian Associations when they bring in representative young people from the home organizations to act on a conference-planning committee with special responsibility for making the program really express the things that are "on the delegates' minds."

From the testimony thus gathered the young people who make up the membership of these summer institutes appear to fall into three general classes, according to the major motives that bring them. These have been described as: (1) the delegate who comes with felt responsibilities to a home organization and program; (2) the delegate with some personal problem on which he seeks help; and (3) the delegate who comes simply for companionship in a good time. All of these types require attention, both for what is in their own minds and for what the leaders expect of them.

I. THE SOCIALLY PURPOSEFUL DELEGATE

This type includes those who have been sent by their home organizations to get training for their

duties with a program for the coming year; also other socially awakened young people who appreciate a fellowship around more worth-while interests than bridge, fudge, and sports. They know something of the responsibilities and satisfactions that come with taking one's part in the issues of one's day.

The leaders look to this group of delegates as active spirits who can be counted on to share and further the educational purposes of the conference.

II. THE PERSONALLY PERPLEXED DELEGATE

This type (especially among students) includes some who are trying to reach a decision as to their life work—also many whose early-acquired religious beliefs are being shaken by their contacts with historical and critical study. Many are confused and restive under what they feel as regimentation in their home, church, and school life. Ideas and standards (e.g., as to sex relations) that they had received as authoritative are now under question. Others are confused and uneasy because, after years of sheep-like conformity to conventional patterns in these matters, they are being set by their leaders to think for themselves. Perplexities arise both for independent youth under authoritarian elders and for dependent-minded youth under democratic-minded elders.

Conference leaders expect to find in this group

young people who have displayed capacity for influence in local situations, but who have never been exposed to the wider interests and problems of society and therefore need an enlargement of social vision. Some are really living in two circles: a circle of neighborhood and campus relations in which they are roused and ethically competent, and a zone of relations to society at large, in which their thinking lacks reality and grasp. Leaders often have definite ideas of the adjustments needed in this group, where the young people themselves are conscious only of vague dissatisfactions.

III. THE HOLIDAY-MINDED DELEGATE

This type comprises young people of the more drifting sort, many of them of good quality and capacity, but unawakened either to outreaching interests or to their own spiritual needs. Usually they are drawn to the conference by the fact that friends are going or by reports of those who had "good times" the year before, or by expectations raised by the conference's printed announcement on which a tree-fringed cove and diving board figure prominently. In many cases the young person is a problem to his elders, who have sent him in the hope that good companionship and the conference experiences will give him a start for the better.

To the leaders this group is a challenging one. Lacking any real interest in the main purposes of

the conference, these young folk are easily disaffected toward its working program. Yet their state of mind is so often the result of miseducation rather than of inner lack that the conference experience often brings them back another year as delegates of one of the more purposive types.

This survey of the states of mind that "conferees" bring to a conference has led some students to think of the total personnel of a typical summer gathering as ranged along a sort of interest-scale. Near the zero end are the holiday-minded; then follow at successive points the personally perplexed and those who in varying degrees are spiritually and socially enlisted. A successful conference would be one which ended with each delegate measurably further along the scale than he had registered at its beginning. In planning an educational conference, therefore, the key questions are (1) "What is the conference trying to do?" and (2) "Just what in the delegates' minds comes nearest to the matters with which the conference purposes to deal?" An educational experience must begin with the learner where he is. The program, regimen, and activities of a successful conference will be devised with a careful regard to the conditions under which enlargements of interest and understanding take place.

Conference Aims

Having taken the view that a summer conference of young people is to be planned as a special educative episode within life experiences which may also be educative, a training-course group will go on to analyze the specific conference aims. As studied thus far the aims may be summarized as follows:

1. To develop specific understandings and skills, especially for leadership in carrying out the programs of home organizations.

2. To afford young people a concentrated and guided experience of socially enlightened living.

3. To afford help to individuals in their problems of personal adjustment.

4. To give inspiration and strengthening in "ideals."

Each of these aims requires a special scrutiny as to what it means and what measures it calls for.

I. THE AIM TO DEVELOP UNDERSTANDINGS AND SKILLS FOR THE CONDUCT OF HOME PROGRAMS

A conference that carries out this aim will plan for features in its program which afford a training in the *process* by which socially valid convictions are reached. This involves a cooperative rather than argumentative attitude toward differences of view, real freedom for expression of conflicting

ideas and feelings, a procedure that invites fair-mindedness and self-determined adjustments on difficult issues—in short, a profit-inviting mood and method of discussion. The principles and technique of group discussion, of course, require a study in themselves.[1] As displayed in a conference, they require special thought for the function of leaders in meetings that are to enlist a general democratic participation. Meetings so conducted have a two-fold problem: (a) How to secure discussion which is at once cooperative, free, and fair to all parties, and yet which "gets somewhere"; (b) How in this process to secure a responsible use of data from people who have special expertness and experience?

In the Inquiry course it was noted that three different kinds of leader were being invoked:

1. The chairman or director of the group procedure;
2. The scientific specialist;
3. The person of experience and conviction who brings a wider outlook on the matter under discussion.

The leader of the first type is charged with a special responsibility for the thought-process of the conference. As chairman he is directly concerned with the two-fold problem just mentioned. He recognizes that in any complex situation under study the issues before the group are partly issues of fact

[1] See pp. 87-8, 97-100. Also H. S. Elliott, *The Process of Group Thinking*.

—so that discussion requires stoking with fresh data from competent sources, and partly issues of purpose—requiring thought about values as sensed by people of differing backgrounds and points of view. Here the likely progress is not toward an "either-or" decision, but toward a mutual appraising and discriminating of purposes by which they find experimental adjustments. The chairman, therefore, is watchful of the attitudes and reactions of the conferees, and takes care in his own questions and summaries to register and interpret the progress of the group, without weighting its conclusions in the direction of his own views as to what is desirable.

A practical question was here raised as to the feasibility of group discussion under this sort of leadership at a large conference. There was testimony that the sub-dividing of an assembly into small groups for face-to-face conferring had been carried out successfully at several conferences. The best results followed where care was taken to have each group in its personnel and diversities of view a cross-section in miniature of the whole body.

The leader of the second type, the scientific expert, is interested, not in the fortunes of the particular discussion in which he is called on, but in the adequacy and reliability of the data which it brings to bear on the situation discussed. As a resource for discussion the printed text-book or other data-

material has somewhat the same relation. It brings into view the past history of the subject and the findings of specialists in it. On certain issues of fact, it is evident, the thought of lay delegates must be dependent on the help of such "subject-specialists." The economist, the historian, the psychologist, the anthropologist, are leaders of this type.

The leader of the third type is usually a person prominently identified with the issue discussed—not an expert in the scientific sense, but one who speaks out of long and wide experience and responsible concern. His special interest at the conference is to share this experience and the convictions that have grown out of it. The labor leader, the statesman, the school administrator, the returned missionary are leaders of this type.

As usually conducted, conferences have been pretty much shaped and dominated by platform speakers of the second and third of these types. If conferences in the future are to make a point of getting delegates to think for themselves, there must be devised a procedure by which the contribution of platform addresses shall be made more integral with the discussional program. Difficulties in the way of this are, first, that the speaker is apt to be a person in some demand and, therefore, available only by appointment for a certain day and hour; second, that he expects to present a finished speech or lecture which develops the subject on its

own lines without special reference to the points that have been arrived at in the conference discussion; third, that the appearance of a man with a set speech throws all the delegates into "audience" attitudes of mind. Furthermore, the speaker (especially of the third type) is apt to be a special pleader for conclusions of his own. His speech deals not only in facts but in the value-judgments which the delegates should find for themselves. In order really to gear in with a discussional process, the speaker must be brought into touch with the conferees, either by sitting in on their discussions or by getting their states of mind from the discussion leaders. At present, various conferences are running on a sort of compromise between discussions and addresses. They either set the delegates to discussing what the platform speaker brings them, or they treat the platform address as a special unrelated event, an interesting diversion in the program.

The students of conference method in the Inquiry training course had found no real incompatibility between lectures and discussions in a group process based on a "situation approach." Their difficulties arose around the question not *whether* to have a lecture, but *when* and *how* to have it. A lecturer may help the group at any stage of a thought process. He may deal with the "situation"—widening and enriching the group's view of it; he may help with analysis and technical data on the problem;

or he may set out one course of action as a possibility to be thought through. Where a lecture is to be used to introduce the theme of discussion, the leader may be helped by the following suggestions—offered by Professor Elliott:

1. Provide a chairman, other than the speaker, for the discussion. He should know how to define the issue for discussion as set by the speech. Otherwise discussion will scatter. Where people ask the speaker questions, the chairman will know how to guard the process from merely drawing out additions to the lecture—namely by turning the group from questions to *reactions* to what the speaker has said.

2. If possible, make out beforehand an analysis of the matter as it stands in the delegates' thinking, and ask the lecturer to speak on particular questions.

3. If the lecturer is at home in discussion, get him to cast his speech into "situation approach" form. He can then, after stating the problem, pause to ask testimony from the experience of the group. His own conviction can then be offered not as *argued* for, but as presented for a fair comparison with possible alternatives.

4. If the lecturer has come with a set speech already prepared, introduce it as representing one point of view on a question requiring discussion.

5. Upon completion of the lecture, let the speaker seat himself among the hearers, so that he will not be expected to dominate the discussion.

The delegate's training will thus include a demonstration of group thinking. It will, of course,

include a concern with matters that widen his outlook on social experience. This is partly a matter of new acquaintanceships among delegates and leaders with widely diverse responsibilities and interests, partly a matter of special information that sets local experiences in larger social perspectives. The delegate should be helped to see his own local organization as a resource for action, and to study its program, purpose, and performance with a competent regard for its effectiveness.

II. THE AIM TO AFFORD A CONCENTRATED EXPERIENCE OF WORTH-WHILE LIVING

For the period of the conference, each delegate has in the natural setting, the living arrangements, the program, the companionships in study and sport, a sustained "laboratory practice" in socially enlightened living. Such an experience should afford outdoor exercise and rest, a pleasurable fellowship in purposive thinking—an enjoyable sharing of serious interests that will set up new standards for the use of leisure, a widening of acquaintanceships to include people of different backgrounds and points of view, a measure of responsibility in administering their life together as an experiment in democracy.

With these considerations, the students in the Inquiry course directed their first attention to the suitability of the place chosen for the conference. It should be a place, they felt, somewhat removed

from every-day distractions, and with living and working conditions fully under the control of the conference. Beauty of natural setting, with resources for out-door sports, are favorable to a way of life at once wholesomely active and purposefully reflective.

As to the sharing of control by the young people, there was agreement that this should be made an educative concern of the conference. The guiding principle should be to increase delegate responsibility as growth comes in the capacity to take responsibility, safeguarding in the meantime what needs to be safeguarded. In the matters requiring control—the program, attendance, quiet hours, decorum, safety, etc.—delegates show different "independence ages," whatever their ages in years. The problem of educational administration is to adjust responsibilities to the actual independence ages of the delegates and to shape an experience that moves them farther along. Where democratic control of the conference has worked badly in the past, the testimony has been either that responsibility was thrust upon the delegates without due study of their readiness for it, or that it was limited in ways that made it seem unreal. Discussion of this testimony in the training course dwelt on four points:

1. Where "self-determination" is hedged about with supervisions and vetoes by the leaders, the delegates feel that responsibility is not really in their own hands.

2. Where it applies merely to details of regulation and discipline and not to program, it lacks dignity. The young people feel themselves merely to be restricting themselves to protect the comfort of the adults.

3. There should be a studied progression in responsibility. The young people themselves prefer a cooperative control where the thought and experience of the leaders count in planning and administration, but their own share makes all the difference between a conference made *by* them and one made *for* them. On each matter for control the guiding thoughts in setting responsibility are (a) At what point on the scale of readiness (between no participation and full participation) are the delegates with respect to this matter? and (b) Go as far (in their participation) as will carry you still farther.

4. Democracy requires its appropriate facilities and divisions of function. The idea of democratic control has been discredited by being identified with haphazard, town-meeting methods. It is an abuse of democracy to set three hundred people to decide how the conference shall be run and who the speakers shall be. The whole group should decide the sort of experience it means to have, but it should set up a representative steering committee of leaders and delegates which can interpret the developing concerns of the conference in such wise as to address the program from day to day to the real psychological situation.

Students of "conferencing" are bound to raise questions as to problems occasioned by the merely "holiday-minded" people who are present. Where you have members who have come for a social "good time," or to get a certain prestige at home

from figuring as delegates, how far can conference leaders let such motivations simply take their course? In an earlier institute of leaders this question brought out the following remarks from Professor W. H. Kilpatrick:

If we are going to do this thing right, let us bear in mind, first, that it is this holiday-minded boy as a person in and of himself who must come to see the reasons for things, and, because of his own intention to do the right thing and his own appreciation of why it is right, does it that way. It is the person who can and will act from such considerations that we want to build up, and we haven't done our job until we have done that. As leaders, it is our business here to make ourselves progressively unnecessary. We succeed in the degree that our young people progressively become able to take over their decisions, their own choices in directing themselves.

The second thing is that the right kind of character will progressively take into account more and more the "why," the reasons that lie in the situation. We must build characters that more and more look at the thing as a whole, take more and more factors into account, see them more and more related, reckon with more and more reasons. Along with each "why" there should come a correlative appreciation of the worth of that consideration. Then we shall have not only an intellectual perception but an appreciation of the importance of the thing, the grippingness of the importance. And this will set us toward specific habits.

The character you want is one that is willing to act, to accept responsibility for its act, and to take more and more things into account. The personality we are working with is more and more self-directing as a person amid social situations where other persons must also be self-directing. Per-

sonality is a person amid persons. You get your very definition there. The thing that is good is the way of behaving that gets all of them to grow together. So it is our business to look for ways of growth on their part—growth in self-direction, assuming responsibilities, taking other people into account so that they too may grow into open-mindedness. That is what I understand democracy to be.

III. THE AIM TO AFFORD INDIVIDUAL COUNSEL ON PERSONAL PROBLEMS

The delegate with a personal problem—whether one of adjustment to other people or one of vocational choice—naturally seeks help at the conference from some leader of wide experience and outlook. What are guiding considerations here?

In the Inquiry course, as in earlier studies, Professor Elliott drew attention to the psychological aspects of the interview relation. The delegate, he noted, is in need of a good listener to whom he can express his fears and feelings without any sense of incurring condemnation, and with a hope of good counsel. He is readily repelled if he senses that the interviewer's attitude is one of moral disapproval of a person in his sort of difficulty. In the second place, the delegate's emotional attitude toward the interviewer is easily misconstrued by the latter. The former's past experience disposes him to see the persons whom he has to deal with not simply as the individuals before him but as types. If his experience with authority has been one of friction

with his father, he will expect the same incompatible pattern in a teacher, minister, conference leader, or any other person who seems to represent the father-type in an established order of things. In this state of mind he is likely to give thrusts at the interviewer which the latter resents—with unhappy results for the interview. The important thing for the leader to bear in mind here is that the thrust is an emotional response to a preconceived type, and that if he treats it quite impersonally, carrying out his part in a purely objective and representative capacity, he can help the delegate to shift his point of view and get a new idea of what authority is—with a resulting cooperative attitude toward it. The same consideration applies when the delegate is predisposed not to a combative but to a dependent attitude. A boy who has grown dependent on mothering will on leaving home find a new mother in a teacher, leader or other adult. What he needs is a sympathetic but objective response, steadily strengthening his power to think objectively and act for himself. Otherwise the counsel that we give him merely continues his bondage. People who "hang on our words" should be weaned.

In a first interview, Professor Elliott continued, the difficulties that get expressed are apt to be not the real problem but mere symptoms. The traits that display maladjustment—"selfishness," touchiness, etc.—are to be dealt with only by getting back

to their sources. Commonly their sources lie in the total frame-up of the person's home situation, and he needs help in getting a true picture of it so as to adjust his environment instead of trying to fight it.

Several practical suggestions came out of the training group. The interview, it was felt, should be spontaneously sought by the delegate, not mechanically scheduled for him. Arrangements may be simply provided for times and places at which leaders can be seen by appointment. In the matter of vocational decisions, what should be aimed for is not an emotional appeal that weights the claims for some particular service that the interviewer has at heart. The conference should use the interview, along with other presentations which should help the delegate to integrate the various appeals in the situation before him, and to make a decision that takes account of all that is really involved.

IV. THE AIM TO GIVE INSPIRATION AND STRENGTHENING OF "IDEALS"

The delegates often come together from neighborhoods dominated by conventional and philistine standards of pleasure and success. They need to find a public opinion that will sustain and reinforce ideals and interests which have no popular support at home. The conference sets worth-while purposes at the social advantage of being shared by normal and popular young folk. In various ways the con-

ference affords a "mountain-top" experience in which spiritual values have a chance to register in life resolves.

As a specific aim to be planned for, this emotional uplift is now differently regarded among students of conference method. In the Inquiry course it occasioned some earnest thought about the place in a conference of addresses and other features that are distinctively "inspirational." It was agreed that what is really desired is new insight that acts as a stimulus to reserves by which one responds to a life situation in a larger, finer way. The emotional glow should be the feeling-tone of purposive doing. There is possibility, however, of inducing the emotion for its own sake. People who attend inspirational meetings can build a habit of being stirred to high feelings without responding to the real situation on any higher level of action. That way lies sentimentality.

In short, there seem to be two ideas about the emotional drive by which ideals are realized. One view—the popularly current one—is that you think your way through your problematic situation and then seek an emotional boost to carry the appropriate action out. This seems to call for a definite stage of stimulated emotion—usually a reviving of past emotions associated with bygone experiences. It may be by worship, song, inspirational speeches. The other is that if you face your situation with a

genuine striving of spirit, it will show itself charged with an emotional dynamic which will give the right reinforcement to effort. In this view, "any experience that over-stimulates or draws forth emotion out of relation to the situation in which it ought to be operative is a hindrance to the acquisition of habits that make for growth."

Various national organizations are seeking to give effect to these four aims of the summer institute by a unified and consistent plan for the activities of each conference day. As carried out by the Young Women's Christian Association, a day's program often deals with one theme, which is explored and illuminated through a series of sessions. It is here outlined, not as a model for imitation—for some leaders demur at the uniform pace which it imposes on delegates of varying readiness—but as a promising type of experimental conference effort. Thus:

1. The morning worship is planned to establish an atmosphere and attitude of mind favorable for thought on the theme of the day.

2. The body of delegates divides into discussion groups, each representing a cross-section of current opinions on the theme, with people who speak from different points of view toward it. The discussion-hour serves: (a) to establish the

points at which the issue is of real concern to the delegates; (b) to start people analyzing it; and (c) to discover where they need help in their thinking from those who have special information, wider experience, or maturer reflection on its underlying principles.

3. The groups then come together to hear a specially qualified speaker (usually known as the "consultant" or "resource"), to whom the reporters from the groups have given the questions on which the delegates are desiring his help.

4. The afternoon (otherwise unscheduled) includes an "informal hour" to assure opportunities (a) for persons who have an interest in some special angle of the issue to pursue it further; or (b) for delegates to meet speakers and other specially experienced persons for informal questioning and discussion; or (c) for talk or study.

5. The evening session is given to summary reports from the day's discussions, followed by an address from a mature thinker who deals with some principle that is felt to underlie the issue of the day—as, for example, where the issue has involved a conflict between local group loyalties and larger ideals.

Most effectively, of course, the issue thus threshed out through the sessions of one day will be carried back into the group discussions of the morning after, where the members can reach their convictions in the light of all that has been brought to bear. This step, indeed, is often taken, especially towards the end of the conference, when the delegates may re-

divide as "responsibility groups"—each made up of persons who share some special opportunity or resource for influence.

Such a program is a far more taxing one to conduct than a program of addresses, with the delegates "taking notes instead of taking part." Its success depends in part on the availability of competent discussion leaders, and even more on the pains that have been taken to assure a real understanding among the delegates of the rationale of what they are doing. Most people come to a conference with habits of dependence on "authorities" for answers to their questionings, and are disposed to grow impatient of group-thinking as so much wasted time. It will take repeated experiences to establish the patterns of thought by which they will expect to move rewardingly from analysis to experiment for themselves.

The present section has dealt almost exclusively with conferences in which adults participate with young people. The great number of such conferences, and their importance as opportunities only half grasped, give them a first claim to this scrutiny. But the same kind of analysis is due to conferences of adults alone. Notable beginnings with educationally sound procedures have been made by such groups as the Country Life Association, by certain State Conferences of Social Work, by progressive

industrialists with leader-training programs and, of course, by numerous educational organizations.[1]

The Convention

As compared with the institute assembly, which is dominantly educational in its purpose, the convention is dominantly political. It is a stated meeting of representatives from unit groups of a state or national organization, with purpose (a) to appraise the organization's progress, (b) to inspire morale, (c) to take bearings and determine directions for another cycle of its activities. The character of a convention as a *representative* body that takes *legislative* action gives to its proceedings their distinctive pattern as a group experience. In its currently prevailing form this pattern displays three outstanding features: (1) Its business starts with motions, brought in by individuals or committees who have decided for themselves or their faction what they want, and who proceed by debate to persuade, if they can, a majority of the delegates to adopt their decision. (2) Its leadership makes a good deal of prestige, since this adds to the weight of debaters, and to the authority of chairmen acting as umpires of debate. (3) Its morale as an organized assembly is promoted by inspirational speeches which re-

[1] For a helpful summary of lessons and suggestions drawn from many conference experiences, see Appendix II of H. S. Elliott's, *The Process of Group Thinking.*

store the confidence and unity of feeling that have been impaired by the defeating of minorities.

The customary practice by which the business of a convention is thus conducted has become familiar in the code known as "parliamentary procedure." This code is likely to get increasing criticism from students of social thinking. If a valid thought-process is one that begins with inquiring looks at the situation before proceeding to thought about action, then it must be admitted that a parliamentary motion skips the "situation approach" altogether and starts the discussion on "what to do." Psychologically, that seems exactly the wrong way to start people conferring. The essence of conferring is to make a social approach to a problem by getting all the parties to it to look at it questioningly, each being disposed to accept some change in his present view so long as the others are so disposed too. A motion represents a personal approach to the problem, so far as the thinking goes. What it offers is a proposed solution—one that somebody has thought out by himself and to which he now seeks to win the meeting's assent. Its immediate effect is to line the speakers up on two sides, saying respectively yes and no to the proposal. Instead of moving from a fresh inspection of the situation, through a cooperative analysis of its difficulty, to a comparison of suggested ways out, the group is set to attacking and defending the end re-

sults of one man's thinking. The worst of this sort of start is that each speaker, having taken sides, cannot easily change his view without seeming to back down, so that the group loses altogether the *considering* state of mind towards its problem.

This criticism involves, first, the practice now current in conventions, of having the analysis of a situation out of which proposals arise not set for general discussion but deputed to a committee, which brings before the general body only some sponsored proposal; it involves, secondly, the practice of debate itself, with its fight pattern of pros and cons and an umpire chairman who merely "recognizes" such disputants as spring to their feet and invokes "rules of order" to keep the fight fair. In contrast to these practices, certain organizations are experimenting with procedures that enlist the whole delegate body at each stage of the thought process, and do so with a discussional technique by which people can have their views and wishes questioned without feeling that they have been attacked.

Foremost in developing newer methods for their conventions are the two national Christian Associations. The National Board of the Y. W. C. A. secured a notable participation by its members in threshing out the policies that were dealt with at its Milwaukee convention. Its methods to this end included:

a. Before the convention: Discussion of the issues in local groups all over the country, stimulated and informed by syllabus data that had been worked out for the purpose.

b. In the convention: Informal *conference* sessions in which the delegate body divided into groups, each showing a small cross-section of the whole, and including all the interests and slants involved in the issues.

The possibility of dealing effectively in the latter way with even so complex a matter as a budget, was illustrated by the National Council of the Y. M. C. A.[1] at a recent meeting in Chicago, where an assembly of three hundred delegates divided for conference purposes into ten groups, each with its own chairman of discussion. The procedure was as follows:

1. The budget was presented to the full assembly by experts dealing with its various phases, the delegates jotting down, as they listened, their own queries and challenges to what was being set forth.

2. These queries and challenges were then collected and organized in a six-page summary, on the basis of which the ten chairmen worked out question outlines for their groups. The questions focussed on two issues:

a. Were the policies underlying the budget proposals sound and consistent with the Association purposes?

b. Were the proposals practicable to carry out?

[1] A detailed study of the practices and suggested changes of procedure in this body has been made in a Report of the Committee of Five to Study the Work of the National Council Member.

3. These questions were then threshed out in the sectional groups, with the experts called in here and there as they were needed.

4. The *summaries* of these group sessions took shape as the *proposals* on which the assembly finally voted.

Discussion in a convention requires a special concern with the fact that the disputants are present in a representative rôle, and speak not simply for themselves but for their home constituencies. On a matter of legislation, for example, each delegate has to face two aspects of any proposal; namely:

a. Is this desirable in itself, on its own merits?

b. Is it expedient, in view of its likely consequences for the morale and influence of the organization?

On the first of these aspects each delegate can freely speak for himself; on the second he speaks as trustee, in a sense, for the interests of the total membership, with a special responsibility to register the point of view of his local group. This complication in the thinking of delegates is sometimes met by *dividing the question,* so as to deal with the two aspects separately.

Enough has been done in the newer experimental ways to give promise of rewarding developments in convention technique. The steps of change from patterns of debate to patterns of conference will require skill and patience in the leaders, for the

actors of the new have their minds still grooved by the old, and fall unwittingly into the time-honored practices. People cannot remake their organizational habits overnight. On the other hand, people have abundantly experienced in old-line conventions the fact that a round of brisk debates and inspirational addresses in which "a good time is had by all" results in distressingly little impetus to the organizational activities back at home. If without forcing the pace leaders will get members increasingly to share the convention problem, we shall have "practice with satisfaction" of procedures that are democratically sound.

Problems of the Committee

That sub-group of the Inquiry class which undertook to study the processes and technique of committee-service had perhaps a special difficulty in that committee-work is always enmeshed in a larger institutional situation, and hardly shows up for what it is when one tries to detach it for inspection. Assemblies and conventions come round as the high spots in an institutional cycle. They stand out in themselves and invite appraisal as events. Committees, on the other hand, are simply distributing points in the routine flow of organizational activities. They bring to a focus whatever develops for consideration and responsible decision out of circumstances in daily change, and take their patterns

of group relationship and behavior—at least in part—from the demands of the occasion.

It has seemed hardly profitable, therefore, to begin a study of committee technique with an attempt to classify committees by types and to display them in family-tree fashion, as on an organizational chart. Their instructive points as working groups are not suggested by any such abstract and static lay-out. We may, however, recognize certain distinctive kinds of committee *task,* each of which brings into question: (a) the kind of decision that is sought, (b) the make-up and relationships of the committee group, and (c) the methods by which the group takes hold of, and moves through, its deliberative job. Viewing the different kinds of task for which boards and committees are set up, we are likely to find them characterized according to one or another of five distinctive functions; namely:

1. An Executive Function. The committee is here a sub-group deputed to carry out some course of action desired by the association which it is appointed to serve. For example, the program committee of a state organization of social workers is charged with providing what shall take place at its annual conference. The state association has already decided *what* to do—namely to have a series of conference meetings. The Committee must now decide *how* to do it and take the steps that commit specific persons to do specific things at stated times and places, and must continue their responsibility into and through the sessions themselves, to see that plans are really put into effect.

2. A Legislative Function. Where a deliberative body has to pass a variety of measures which come to it in varying degrees of ill-preparation, it appoints one or more subgroups to organize the data on each measure in such wise as to assure its effective discussion by the whole body. The committee is thus a small *sampling* of the whole, charged with expediting the legislative process by getting the facts accessible and the issues clarified. In some cases the committee's work on a measure virtually disposes of it for the assembly.

3. An Adjusting Function. Where a conflict of interests arises *between groups,* each appoints members to act as spokesmen in a face-to-face *adjustment committee,* which seeks a way out of the situation that will satisfy what each essentially wants. For example, a shop committee of management and employee spokesmen will display this function when discussing a wage-scale.

4. An Administrative Function. The committee here is a group vested with continuous control of a going concern. Its members are responsible to a wider constituency, but do not need formal endorsements of their decisions by the latter—which, indeed, takes action as a body only when specially called on, or when it becomes dissatisfied. The board of directors of a business shows the working of an administrative group. Its members are among the larger owners of the enterprise. They meet to formulate policies and make major decisions, but they employ a business technician and staff to conduct the enterprise and devise plans for its development.

5. A Trustee Function. The committee here is administrative, but its members are not owners but *sponsors* of the enterprise, which is some form of institutional service to

the public—as a college, a social agency, a Y. M. C. A. The work of such an enterprise is specialized and technical, so that its programs and plans are shaped in the main by employed professional executives. What the lay committeemen do is primarily "to guarantee the enterprise to the community. They vouch for its financial integrity and for the worth of what it seeks to do."[1] Their relationship involves meetings in which they pass upon plans that are formulated by the staff. The persons sought for trustee rôles are naturally those "well known in the community and whose names carry weight."

The groups performing these five functions show their common character as committees in the following respects: what we have in each case is a small face-to-face group, permanent or temporary, which focuses responsibility for decisions on matters with which it is charged by an inclusive body, towards which its members stand, whether formally or but loosely, in a representative relation. The task before such a group is really a cooperative interpretation of situations in which large organizational purposes are at stake. If the committee has never had the study it deserves as a social test-tube, it is because successful committeemen have been too absorbed in "getting things done" to have either time or detachment to reflect on their methods. They win successes and make mistakes without leaving records in each case of how they did it, or sug-

[1] From an unpublished paper by J. A. Urice on "Committee Processes and the Lay Character of the Young Men's Christian Association."

gestions as to the ways in which next comers might better their performance. Today, however, the sheer pressure of organizational demands means that we must replace our off-hand trial-and-error habits with objectively tested methods of procedure. Social organizations, like industries, are finding that their very survival depends on a scientific elimination of waste—of the social waste of frictions and missed leads in group functioning. One evidence of this has been the number of letters and interviews from organizational leaders who have been attracted by the Inquiry's concern with committee-work. The Inquiry course at Columbia has perhaps sketched out the lines along which their study may be fruitfully pursued. Its first steps in analysis resulted in three groups of questions, as follows:

Questions as to the Kind of Decision That Is Sought

In committee-work it is presupposed, of course, (1) that the task is one that can be more effectively done by a group than by a single person, and (2) that the group carries a power either to act on behalf of, or to recommend action to, the organization of which the committee is a part. These assumptions mean that a committee decision is something composite, that more gets decided than the simple what-to-do answer which its action or recommendation may seem to show. Its decision to do this or

that is one that must gather into its drive various concerns felt by different elements in the organization for which it acts. For example, the organization may be an association for social work among underprivileged girls. A committee of this association, meeting to take action on an opportunity—say, to supply a particular group of girls with club facilities—may indeed seem to be forming a decision of no special complexity. Here are certain definite needs; there, certain arrangements and resources that they call for. Does not the purpose of the association require of its committee merely a decision to do the sort of thing for which the association exists?

The answer is that those who associate for one purpose or interest have other interests to think of, *and find their own habitual valuations affecting, and affected by, the way their association purpose is pursued.* Thus, *the way* in which the committee decides to help in the case before them may express and strengthen either "guardianship" sentiments or democratic sentiments—the former by doing things *for* girls, the latter by doing things *with* girls. Again, it may give effect to an ideal of Christian charity, or to a civic idea of social insurance—the outlay on these girls being viewed as a protection of standards of life for the community. And the test by which the committee satisfies itself in acting may lie either in the *amount* that now gets done for

these girls, or in the *educational "spread"* of what is done—in the start it affords to the girls and their friends towards club activities and relationships that will carry themselves. All these sentiments, ideals, values, are thus drawn within the orbit of the committee decision. In consequence we have two questions about the *kind* of decision that is sought:

1. In what way can and should values that are diversely felt among the membership be "integrated" in the committee decision?

2. In what ways can the decision be contrived to occasion growth in the social thinking of the membership?

The first of these questions directs thought to the cost in time of a decision that represents a real integration of differences instead of a prevailing majority view or a compromise. Most committee-meetings run under a pressure for time and an urge for "getting things done." Perhaps the needed step here is to get the *deliberative* work of a committee more clearly recognized, and the committee time freed from *executive* details which tend to crowd out the more significant group processes. There are, of course, other ways in which significant differences fail to register in decisions. The "nice" committee meeting, in which "every vote was unanimous" may be due to committee habits that invite lazy or timid deferences to "solutions" that come sponsored by a forceful chairman, by a socially

"important" member, or by the expert executive of the group. Such habits, of course, will give way only with procedures that stir responsible and creative attitudes towards the differences of conviction among committee conferees.

The second question—how to make decisions a means of progressive growth to the members—is one that is engaging the thought of organized agencies for religious, educational and social work. Here the desire for an enrichment of social thinking among all who share in a decision is a part of the strengthening sentiment for democratic processes in group life. But it comes at a time when the fixed pattern for such groups is that of lay boards employing professional secretaries to do the work of the organization. The resulting techniques have naturally been those which get things efficiently done rather than those which enlist people in planning. Much of what is done would hardly be undertaken without the services of a skilled executive, but the dependence of board and committee on the executive usually leads him to come prepared with a *specialist's solution* which becomes a substitute for any *group-conviction* on the matter. The present question is therefore how to use the knowledge and skill of the secretary in reaching committee decisions without losing the impetus to growth which the members can gain from a mutual testing of their own desires.

Questions of Make-up and Relationship in the Committee Group

It is evident from the foregoing reflections on the kinds of decision to be sought from committees that the set-up of a committee, with the relationships involved between its members, will affect their attitudes towards their task. The Inquiry class took special note of certain tendencies of attitude and reaction that seem inevitable in the average board and committee group. These arise from the following typical circumstances:

1. The preparation for the committee meeting is done by a paid secretary whose relation to the other members of the group is first of all that of an expert or specialist to laymen.

2. The success of the committee task is part of the personal success of the secretary as an employee. His relation to board or committee members who are really his employers naturally makes him regardful of *success as they see it.*

3. The financing of organizational enterprises quite properly calls for the presence on the committee of members whose relation to the task is that of getting or giving the money for it.

The first of these complications—that of the expert-lay relationship—has already been remarked as entailing some hazard to committee thinking as a process of social growth. It raises the question what sort of expertness is most to be sought in the executive member of the group. At present, the

secretary of an organization usually feels that he is expected to know both what needs to be done and how it should be done. This means that he brings ready-made objectives to the meeting instead of getting his fellow members to shape up objectives that express their own purposes with the organization. The latter course would demand something of the art of discussion leadership, and it is an unsettled question where, in a committee group, the rôle of discussion-leading should reside. The current practice is to vest the chairmanship in a lay member with social weight but imperfect grasp, who is helped to a semblance of leading by the secretary's whispered *obbligato* in his ear. Such a procedure rests, of course, on the idea that discussion-leading requires prestige rather than any special art. Ideally, perhaps, the art of "concerted thinking" should reside in the whole committee group, so that a creative interplay of minds would follow from a common regard for the problem-solving process. Until we can bring about some such common art of participation, we shall need some special expertness in the executive, if there is to be a rewarding thought-process in the meeting.

The second of these complications—that of the employee relationship of the secretary to his board—directs attention to the standards of success by which his employer-associates in the enterprise judge his contribution to it. The usual pattern of achieve-

ment held before him is that of the successful promoter. He is looked to as one who "supplies the incentives which enlist men in sufficient numbers to undertake programs."[1] By promotion he brings increasing numbers to supply money and give time to the enterprise. In the committee he displays a command of organizing technique and a zest that inspires confidence and enthusiasm. Where objectives are concrete, as in raising money, securing buildings, and remedying definite abuses, such a rôle is effective. "Its shortcoming is that men participate without feeling deeply the necessities of the cause involved. Essentially they are participating in purposes not their own—or, in so far as these are their own, they are not related to the root of the matter." The success here achieved is the success of salesmanship. It confirms committeemen in a relationship wherein they are led to *think through* their objectives only so far as commits them to cooperate. "The next leader who comes along with another proposition can secure an interest equally easy"—and equally shallow.

The third complication—that of the weighting of a man's influence on committee thinking by the fact that he is a large contributor—is perhaps one to be studied in relation to the whole problem of prestige. A man in this position is apt to lose any

[1] J. A. Urice, *op. cit.* The present section on relationships within the committee owes much to Mr. Urice's analysis.

real testing of his purposes and valuations because of the deference which they too easily command. It is a sorry outcome of committee-work in good causes if the experience, through our lack of social art, becomes actually demoralizing to those who underwrite our projects.

Various questions arise from the fact that in a committee the members speak not simply for themselves but as representing each some "interest-group" or point of view in the organization—or in an issue between organizations. In the latter case, as where a joint committee of employers and trade unionists discuss a labor issue, the representative rôle of each member is formally assumed and explicit. In other cases it is informal, and the responsibility for voicing this or that interest is simply implied in the member's known affiliations. Thus a program committee that is charged with the setting-up of a regional institute is often an assorted "sample" group that has been simply dipped up, so to speak, from the run of members to whom the meetings must be made acceptable. Moreover, we have to reckon with representative rôles that are unintended and unconsciously intruded. A committeeman on an educational project will unwittingly press the special point of view or concern that he happens to have as a lawyer or as member of a Republican club. As spokesman he plays a split rôle—representing not only an interest with a valid

claim but an interest that becomes merely parasitic on the committee's concern.

The position of committeemen as representing others not present has certain effects on committee thinking. Like the convention delegate, the committee member feels himself to be facing two aspects in any matter before him; namely:

a. What course seems most desirable on the merits of the case?

b. What is most expedient in view of the state of mind in my group?

These two aspects complicate the matter even when the groups represented are strata, units or factions within the same organization. Shall the issue between them be allowed to appear starkly at the risk of splitting the fellowship of the whole? And how shall the course that seems most expedient be brought into accord with the idealistic repute of the organization? The real problem underlying such questions is one of "carry-over" from the thought-processes in the committee to the minds of the membership represented. It is one thing to bring the factional spokesmen through to an agreement on what is desirable, where this results from a joint inspection of their differences in the light of the larger bearings of the case. It is quite another to bring a like sense of perspective to the people they speak for. These have not shared in the shifts of

viewpoint and revisions of value that come with well-directed face-to-face discussion. The committee concern with "expediency" thus seems to be imposed by a constant "lag" between the movements of mind within and those without the small "representative" group. Among group leaders there is no more critical problem than this of assuring an educative spread from committee-work to the general membership.

Questions of Method and Procedure

Given the distinctive task of a committee, and the set-up of the committee group, there arise a variety of questions around the planning and guidance of its actual sessions. Just what, for example, is the place of agenda-making in resultful committee work? The source of any given task may appear mainly in a policy laid down by the superior body, or in certain purposes of the executive secretary, or in organizational experiences of the committeemen. Such differences in source doubtless make differences in the way the "situation" before the committee is sensed by its members. Sometimes the members can be enlisted in their own agenda-making. Much depends on the type of committee-group to be reckoned with—for the group may be one in which the members are only half-interested volunteers, needing first of all to be kindled to a real working concern, or it may be one in which the members are

active and responsible, but lacking in attitudes of team-work and faith in a democratic thought-process. An approach to the study of this whole phase of committee-work has been suggested by Mr. J. A. Urice in a few key questions; thus:

1. What conferences or conversations are held between the executive secretary and the chairman—

   a. On between-session business?
   b. In preparation for meetings?

2. What conferences or conversations are held with committee members between meetings—

   a. By the secretary?
   b. By the chairman?
   c. By others?

3. What written materials are sent to committee members between meetings?

4. What agenda are prepared for the meeting?

   a. Who decides what is to appear in the agenda?
   b. How are the agenda circulated?
   c. What matters come up in meetings that do not appear in the agenda?

The students of committee-work in the Inquiry course made some progress in gauging what a committee will grasp as a workable unit of business. Instead of the somewhat loosely defined "situation" which a study-circle may profitably discuss, the committee tends to deal with (a) "units of presenta-

tion"—the terms in which items of business are brought forward—and (b) "units of transaction" —the terms in which the committee can best make headway with decisions.[1] A start was made in appraising the agenda and minutes of various meetings with regard to such matters as:

1. The way in which the problem was stated (whether a wide or a narrow statement).

2. The way in which the situation surrounding the problem is set forth. Is this general statement made in most cases by the secretary and in such broad terms that the committee is left to break the task into definite manageable units? It may be that the bane of multiplying sub-committees is brought about by the need of breaking up a large and inchoate statement.

3. The measure in which the what-to-do stage of thinking is put at the end of a group process that makes for social growth.

An important matter of study seems to be the personality factors that figure in committee rôles. Some of the types of person to be reckoned with are:

1. The member with a point of reference outside the committee. The woman with a husband whose experience is invoked on every question; the man too aware of his section of the country, etc.

2. The restricted-interest member. The banker or lawyer whose attention is caught only at those points where his par-

[1] These distinctions were very helpfully propounded by Mr. Urice and will be developed by him in a forthcoming study.

ticular skill is invoked. The person with an emotional fixation on some idea or panacea, swerving him off the main line of thought whenever the pet idea is touched on.

3. The loquacious person. The person who nervously keeps on adding to what he has said.

4. The silent person who speaks in round periods at the close of a meeting by way of passing judgment on the solution of the problem.

5. The watch-in-hand member, and the person who never sits out a committee meeting.

6. The person with a prejudice against discussing a certain subject or using a certain word, etc.

7. The historically-minded member who keeps seeing the early days of the organization as a background for the business in hand.

8. The member who continually urges people to "be simple" in approaching the most complicated problem.

CHAPTER III

Discussion as the Redirection of Experience

IN a companion volume to the present syllabus,[1] is developed a view and a method of group-thinking that seem likely to figure increasingly in our training for group leadership. Club leaders especially, as noted on a earlier page (p. 14), are beginning to treat discussion as something that has its own directive principles—an art of group dialogue by which people can deal with their differences in ways that are mutually revealing and creative. It is this faith in the possibility of winning higher levels of group experience that has given a new significance to the problems of club, class, conference, and committee outlined in the preceding chapter.

Until recently students of human nature were little disposed to expect the finer fruits of thought to be achievable by persons thinking in concert. The earlier studies of group behavior dealt largely with the psychology of crowds and left a general impression that it is the nature of group relations to make

[1] Alfred Dwight Sheffield, *Creative Discussion;* The Inquiry, Revised Edition, 1927.

persons "crowd-minded." Moreover, the public forms of group deliberation appear distressingly inefficient, so that students of affairs dwell with satisfaction only on the parts played by leaders, whom they tend to picture as the sole sources of energy and vision. What is more, the whole record of achievements in philosophy, science, literature, and art, seems to show the higher reaches of intellectual endeavor only where men have closeted themselves with their own thoughts. Naturally, therefore, we have become very individualistic in our thinking about thinking, and expect what passes between men in groups to represent merely the crude common factors between mind and mind.

We are learning, however, that the interdependence of men in modern life complicates the conditions of their thinking—even as individuals. And as group-members their thought is often addressed to situations within which certain values are dimly emergent, and require the meeting of diverse sensitivities and purposes in order not just to become known but to come into being. A social problem is always immersed in such a situation, and the parties to it react to the situation with their whole personalities, and not simply with their intellects. When they "interthink" as a group, the promise of their effort turns pretty much on the quality and tone of their mutual stimulations. If these are such as call out merely egoistic or crowd reflexes, the group

serves no worthy end. But the stimulations can be directed by an art of interplay between personalities made socially responsive. Here the group gives its problematic situation a creative turn. What one person sees and feels in it stirs new awarenesses in the others, so that their differences in interest and impressionability yield a richer pattern for new experience—one in which their earlier incompatibilities resolve in an orchestration of desires.

Group-thinking of this sort, which stages a confronting of the diversities among people, is perhaps a needed corrective of "group-conditioning"—where similarities in social position and function impart to those who share them a certain common mental "set" that limits the range of their perceptions. Thus, as C. DeLisle Burns has remarked, while no one would impute a "group mind" to small employers as a class, yet one may speak of them as forming a *"mind group,"* with characteristic attitudes and points of view. His business habits and outlook dispose the small employer to be individualistic, regarding himself as the pivot of his enterprise—unmindful of the social conditions contributing to his success; he is impatient of regulatory standards, feeling public control as "interference"; he is masterful and dogmatic, rather consciously "practical," and, as administrator in the customary business system, he tends to view it as fixed and sacrosanct. All this, of course, means that in cer-

tain situations his mind moves with uneven attention and discernment, and that his views and reactions will gain by contact with minds which are "set" to register aspects and values that he may slight or miss. It is here that the discussion group comes into play. Its members, each with his own outlook and his special sensibilities and desires, frame between them a fuller mirroring of the situation than would appear to any one.

The experience of discussion, under auspices which play up its subtler resources, can become an episode out of which people find their older attitudes and assumptions transcended, and a new orientation among their impelling life-values. Here, indeed, we touch upon a needed interpretation of the place of conflict and strain in group experience. It is perhaps in situations of *tension*—where values are at hazard—that new values get their first due *at*tention. For every man the flow of experience comes to pause at nodal points where he grows vividly aware of his whole situation as calling for inner and outer adjustments. The course of circumstance has outrun his capacity for off-hand responses that keep him unshattered in a world of change. Forces are at work about him that elude the formulations of his common sense. What he needs as a person amid persons is an experience not so much of "retreat" as of concerted rumination that taps new sources of spiritual energy and vision.

Such an experience can be won from group discussion. Here the impulses and motivations that seek adjustment make their appearance in a social rehearsal, out of which each party to the changing situation finds its clues as a new life-pattern—a pattern that gives effective direction to his purposes and reintegrates his personality.

Discussion, so considered, demands a special technique of discussion-leading. It requires of the chairman a grasp of the situations discussed, so that the group will see quickly where they call for individual decision by an expert, where they call for individually prepared decision offered for group check-up, and where they call for a decision to be worked out conjointly by the group. It requires of the chairman also that he sees what constitutes a really effective group decision—recognizing the adjustments of purpose and feeling that enter into it. Grasping thus the essentials in discussion starts and endings, he can address himself to the social technique involved in a thought-process that "gets somewhere." Here, as we have already seen, he will face the key-questions: (1) how to get new information most fruitfully introduced? and (2) how to get *considering* attitudes towards the issue? He should make it his constant concern to note and deal with the various kinds of miss-fire response; as, "side-channeling," face-saving, blame reactions, fixed-idea reactions, and word compulsions. Much

that is ordinarily left to chance in the participation and response of group-members can thus be kept to a fruitful course by an understanding discussion leader.

Where discussions arise out of situations in the on-going career of an organization, the leaders will have a special concern with the by-products of effective group-thinking. The effects of its give-and-take on aroused and on unaroused wishes of the participants are important for their morale as an organized fellowship. Discussion leaders, therefore, are seeing the processes of conference as something more than the group-testing of proposals in order to reach plans that will work. They see them as opportunities for the members to reappraise the interests and satisfactions that make their fellowship worth while, and to make vitalizing revisions of its purposes.

CHAPTER IV

Outlining a Training Course for Group Leaders

IT has already been explained (pp. 2 and 3) that the laboratory course for group leaders offered by the Inquiry at Columbia was addressed to a concern with group processes at three points:

1. It viewed group discussion in its due setting of organizational purposes and activities.

2. It aimed to set the student forward in practical skill as a discussion leader.

3. It sought to stimulate and reinforce the social thinking involved in group work by readings from current social science.

Any organization or college department that sets up a training course on the lines sketched out in this syllabus will probably give some thought to the right balance to be preserved between these three aspects of the study.

The Analysis of Group Functioning

Where the course is planned by the officers of an organization for the development of its on-

coming leaders, it will make the first of these three phases consist of some methodical observation and analysis of the make-up and workings of the body to be served. The students will need to see:

a. The general picture presented by the organization as now observed.

b. Its rises and falls in effectiveness as seen through a whole cycle of its activities.

c. The actual conduct of one or more of its meetings.

Each of these views of group functioning must be sought by a method that points the student's attention to the things most significant for group effectiveness and morale. A promising approach to this whole phase of the study can be staked out in question outlines, the general scheme of which will take some such form as follows:[1]

A. The Organization as Now on View

1. *Its group bond or purpose.*

a. What is its stated purpose? How was it arrived at?

b. How did its members come to organize?
—Was their organizing spontaneous? How far was it fostered by outside leadership, publicity, etc.?

c. What reasons do the members mention in conversation as their own reasons for joining or for continuing in the group?

[1] The three question outlines here suggested were worked out by Miss Grace Coyle, who led the sub-section of the Inquiry course dealing with the special problems of clubs.

d. What do they say to new members to induce them to join?
—What means are used to interest prospective members in the organization?

e. What common interests exist in the group?
—How does the group satisfy these interests?

f. What individual interests hold members to the group? (Such interests as opportunity for leadership, for public speaking, for musical or athletic performance, etc.)

2. *Its form and manner of organization*

a. How does the group define its personnel?
—What are the requirements (both specified and customary) for membership?
—What limitations, if any, are placed upon numbers?
—Are members ever dropped?—How?—For what reasons?

b. What officers are there?
Name them.
—What are their duties and powers (both constitutional and customary)?
—How are officers selected?
(Election? Appointment? In either case, by whom? What unwritten limitations—as of sex, race, etc.—upon office-holding?)
—How long do they hold office? (Supposedly? Actually?)

c. What committees are there?
—Give their names, duties (both constitutional and customary), method of selection, as in b.
—Chart their relationships.

d. What other sub-groups (whether officially recognized or not) are there?
—How are they formed and functioning?

e. How did the present form of organization come to be set up?
—Where did the ideas for it come from?
—How were they worked out or accepted?

3. *The activities of its membership.*

a. Specify both the prescribed and the spontaneous or customary activities.
—Kinds of meeting, programs, projects, etc.

b. How does the membership exercise control over policies and programs?
—What procedures are used to enlist the responsibility of members?
—What is the actual participation by members, as shown by attendance, voting, volunteering, etc.?
—How do members express themselves as satisfied or otherwise with the running of the organization?

c. What methods are used to maintain the group morale?
—What symbols of group prestige (badges, insignia, titles, honors, etc.)?
—What rituals or pageantry (initiations, rallies, parades, etc.)?

4. *Relation of the group to other groups.*

a. What are its relationships as a unit group within an inclusive association?
—How do these relationships affect its policies and program?

b. What are its relationships to outside groups?

B. A Cycle of the Organization's Activities

1. *What kinds of organized group were in action?*

   a. What groups in which the rank and file member takes part?
   —Business meeting, social meeting, mass meeting?

   b. What groups in which the rank-and-file member has an elected or appointed representative?
   —Committees, boards, conferences, conventions?

2. *Make out a calendar chart of the organization's activities.*

   a. Show what kinds of meeting occur at what times, indicating where the activities are affected by special conditions within and outside of the organization.

   b. What patterns, if any, appear in the total cycle of activities?
   —Routine meetings at stated intervals? Projects coming to a climax?
   —Programs dictated by events? Emergency activities?

3. *What were the high and the low points of rank-and-file interest?*

   a. At what points in the cycle was the member interest highest?
   —What kinds of activity stirred the most interest?
   —How did members show their interest?
   (Attendance, participation, response to appeals, volunteering for service.)

   b. At what points in the cycle was the member interest lowest?

—What events, competing claims, etc., seemed chiefly to occasion the slumps in interest?

—How did the members show lack of interest? (Absenteeism, etc.)

4. *What were the high and the low points of success in realizing the aims of the organization?*

   a. In realizing its main purposes?

   b. In realizing incidental purposes that it recognizes?

5. *What changes, if any, have taken place in the purposes, policies, or interests of the organization?*

   Specify (a) what they are, and (b) how they are shown.

6. *What changes if any, have taken place in the personnel of the body?*

   If possible, make a bar chart showing comparative numbers at the beginning and at the end of the cycle, of sexes, race-groups or other significant elements in the personnel. Explain any noteworthy change.

7. *What changes, if any, have taken place in the structure of the organization?*

   a. What changes in its formal make-up of officers and committees?

   b. What sub-groups or factions now make themselves felt? In what ways?

c. What changes in methods of control? In determining or in executing policies?

d. What developments in leadership?

C. The Conduct of a Regular Meeting[1]

1. *Types of members in attendance.*

a. What officials, committeemen, and special speakers were present?

b. What was the attendance of active members? Of "marginal" members?
—What proportion of the total membership attended?
—What interest brought out the "marginal" members to this meeting?

2. *Purpose of the meeting.*

a. What matters were transacted?
—List them, indicating the time given to each.

b. How important were they?
—Were they central to the purpose of the organization, or were they incidental?
—Where did the members show most interest?
—In producing the high points of interest what part was played by prestige? By conflict? By morale-creating devices?

c. What had taken place since the last meeting that affected this meeting?

[1] Where the student is new to the organization, he will naturally work on the observations asked for in Outline C before undertaking those called for in Outline B. But if he has served the body through a full cycle of its activities, he will do the work on C with a more sensitive awareness by preceding it with the perspective view which B affords.

3. *The procedure of the meeting.*

a. List the events into which the program divided.
—Note the proportions of the program devoted (1) to carrying on the main purposes of the organization, and (2) to maintaining its upkeep and morale.

b. How efficiently was the meeting conducted?
—Note especially promptness in beginning, dispatch in getting through routine matters, readiness to cut formalities and red tape, succinct statement of issues, smooth transitions from one matter to another, strictness in talking to the point.

4. *Member participation in the meeting.*

a. What proportion of the members present took part?

b. How was the participation distributed?
—Among officers, committeemen, members usually heard from, and members heard from only occasionally?

c. What was the effect on participation of any subgrouping, either official (as committee) or unofficial (as a clique or faction)?
—Was there any suppressed or uncooperative subgroup? If so, what was it?
—Were there group coherences and antagonisms arising from differences in age, position, sex, race?

d. What features of the speaking were noteworthy?
—What features marked the points of interest and progress in the meeting?
—What features impaired interest (repetitiousness, rambling, personalities, etc.)?
—Are there dominating speakers? If so, what gives them their domination?

5. *Morale in the meeting.*

a. Are there evident any persons or issues that are irritating or contentious?
—What are the symptoms?
—At what points did emotional stresses occur? What happened? How did it affect the discussion?

b. How much sociability goes on before and after the formal session?
—What does it indicate as to groupings and congenialities among the members?

Practice in Discussion Leading

Since the interplay of mind on mind is at the very heart of group process, a training course for group experience is bound to concern itself with skill in discussion-leading. It is perhaps sufficient here to emphasize the consideration that led the staff of the Inquiry course at Columbia to require the students to do field work in actual discussion-leading from week to week. Obviously they could achieve skill in leading only by doing it, not by reading about it or seeing a teacher do it. The work outlined in the present syllabus is therefore planned as a study that shall get a constant check-up and enrichment from experience with a group in action.

A competent discussion leader goes before his group with two things: (1) a "feel" for the purpose and possibilities of the meeting, and (2) a map of its presumable thought-sequence. Each of these

elements in his competency calls for a specific concern in the training class. The first naturally brings under view at once the democratic ideal that makes it the business of leaders to set the conditions for people to do effective thinking for themselves—not merely to accept or reject the end results of thinking that has been done for them. It also directs attention to the varieties of temper and attitude of persons and groups in situations of difficulty. For we cannot assume that people are equally disposed to analyze their difficulties, and to test the suggested solutions. They may jump at the first course of action that comes to mind, or they may turn to some authoritative monitor, or they may ask for the verdict of custom and convention. Emotionally they may be unconsciously swayed by fear-reactions which leave them little freedom to think objectively.

The leader, therefore, needs a special wariness for certain possibilities of miscarriage with which any discussion is beset. Especially common and enchanneling is the "either-or" attitude towards questions of present policy. Thus: "Do you believe in our co-educational system, or do you want to change it?" Such a challenge starts by cutting out any hope that a disputant might find himself accepting the system as his own by inheritance and faith, but seeking changes in it that will make it work better. Another false start occurs where the disputants fail to meet on the basis of seeking to move

from present actualities through immediate betterments towards further goals. A discussion on coeducation, for example, miscarried in a certain group because some members were talking of coeducation as it is now going on, while others talked only of what it might be and ought to be. The really fruitful concern of both parties was that of seeing *how to get from the faulty present to a more nearly ideal future.* Otherwise the talk about ideals could come to little more than declarations about how good it would be if things were only different.

The second item of preparation—the "map" which represents the leader's forecast of the likely course of thought in his group—brings under view the varying types of occasion and theme to be prepared for. Even within the general scheme of discussions following an educational aim, these variations of set-up are important. Discussion as a cooperative process of learning may start:

1. From a concrete life-situation.
   Here the posture of affairs may be one in which a question of choice has become clearly defined, or it may be one in which the issues seem confused and baffling.

2. From a proposed topic of current interest.
   The problem here is (a) to connect the topic with the experience and real concerns of the group, and (b) to break the topic up into phases manageable in discussion.

3. From a text-book or other informational source. The problem here has been broached on page 28.

Each of these types of approach calls for its own appropriate pattern of thought-sequence. In the Inquiry course, Professor Harrison Elliott gave full and helpful suggestions towards this critical stage of the leader's preparation. His contribution to the part of discussion-leading in a training course may now be studied in his excellent manual, *The Process of Group Thinking*.

Readings from Social Science

From now on those who seek training for their part in group experience can expect to profit by the growing literature of social science. The more recent advances in psychology, both individual and social, afford a number of suggestive clues to the practical problems of workers in group relations. There is doubtless an initial task (to which the Inquiry has given some concern) to make selections of the passages most pertinent and helpful to group leaders from various technical books and monographs in which they lie rather out of the reading range of busy people. In a training course the best procedure at this stage will perhaps be to have such passages typed or mimeographed and given out as matter for reflection in dealing with specific phases of group problems.

As a first step with this sort of material some leaders are giving out summaries (in their own words) of two or three passages from different authors dealing with the same "key idea." The following is a summary that was recently given out to a study-group in "The Technique of Committee-Work":

"Integrative" Agreement

The test of a group-thinking process lies in what it does for the various interests (desires, "values") which the conferees severally "represent." Their conference is occasioned by (at least seeming) incompatibilities between these interests in some "situation" within which values are differently felt according to differences in people's points of view. Roughly speaking, the task of conference is first to get these points of view really sensed for what they are, and then to get them mutually modified for what they *can be* in some *development* of the situation that would be more satisfying all round.

Each "point of view" takes its specific character from special attitudes that it brings to certain of the values at stake. Most easily noted is the *relative appeal* of the values for each point of view, each conferee having one or more which for him are vivid and important, one or more others to which he can readily "warm up," and one or more (vivid

enough to other conferees) to which he is unresponsive.

The ideal outcome of a conference is an agreement which satisfies all the parties to it as giving them what they *essentially* want, or what they have come to prefer over the things they had begun by wanting. Most deliberative groups, however, view a unanimous agreement as too much to try for. In practice, it may come to an actual tyranny by a minority—if the dissent of one person can veto an agreement reached among all the rest.[1] The accepted type of agreement, therefore, is a prevailing majority view—the minority being expected to acquiesce as good sports and wait their chance to win another day. A majority decision is doubtless the best that can be reached among conferees who have no technique for *evaluating* the interests that they speak for. But it is ethically crude, giving effect to some interests and overriding others by mere force of numbers. Hardly better is a compromise decision—which gives each faction part of its desire, each yielding part for the sake of harmony. An agreement that really respects personalities will express a power created *between* conferees out of new purposes made mutually enhancing, not a power-by-vote of some conferees *over* others.[2] It presupposes an art of discussion

[1] R. M. MacIver, *Community, A Sociological Study,* p. 142.
[2] Mary P. Follett, *Creative Experience,* p. 189.

that will test people's worth-judgments as cogently as debate tests their truth-judgments, and that gets interests which have become static, ingrown, and narrowly construed into new experiences which make them fluid and dynamic.[1]

The process by which a group can deal thus creatively with its differences of view is guided by a technique of attitude-change. A man's attitude toward any given value may get modified in any of three ways; namely:

1. He may come to discriminate what he *really* wants, where he had begun by including non-essentials;
2. He may become willing to pursue what he wants by different *means* from those he at first had in mind;
3. He may come to shift his concern from one want to another which at first had seemed less vivid and important to him.

Where a group comes by such steps to some agreed view of their situation that enlists real cooperation, it has achieved an "integrative" decision. Its members thereby come to "represent" the people they speak for in a new and richer sense. The workers' spokesman, for example, represents no longer the workers' view of *their* good in the situation, but the *workers'* view *of the good of the whole.*

The bearing of such passages is determined by

[1] Ordway Tead, "Purpose as a Psychological Factor in Management," *Taylor Society Bulletin,* December, 1925.

the part which certain ideas are bound to play in any social thinking that goes beyond the uncritical popular assumptions about human nature and social relationships. Thus the ideas in terms of which one recognizes the attitudes and point of view of a fellow-conferee are indexes of the personal and group forces that are involved in conference-relations. They foster a sympathetic awareness of the difficulty in getting the full personality which counts in the life situation to be fully articulate in the discussion. The person who in a conference-circle is to move cooperatively in facing a problem, rehearsing alternatives, evaluating purposes, and deciding on redirective steps is "conditioned" for his part in the process by personal and group factors which make demands on conference technique. Personally he has a certain intelligence level, informational status, experience patterns, certain idiosyncrasies, self-feelings, sensitivities, prestige-responses. As group member he is swayed by certain affinities and pressures—by the group purpose, by group discipline and decorum, by clique or factional bonds, by his own and others' official status. When he speaks, therefore, there may be a question *how much of him is speaking,* what mere segment of his personality may be getting expressed, what group imponderable is registering itself through his spokesmanship.

Such possibilities in group experience will increas-

ingly dispose the officers and leaders of organizations to ground their own technique in the best scientific thinking they can command. One of the next tasks to be done in their service is the compiling of a winnowed bibliography of key passages from social psychology.[1] Meanwhile the list of readings appended to *Creative Discussion* will suggest the directions in which to look.[2]

[1] Such a manual is to be published by the Inquiry.
[2] Alfred Dwight Sheffield, *Creative Discussion.* The Inquiry, 1927, pp. 59-63.

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